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# L O R D   W A S T W A T E R

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V O L .   I .

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

M D C C C X C I I



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# LORD WASTWATER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### HATTON TOWERS.

IT had long been a subject of regret to Blankshire society that Hatton Towers, the largest and most beautiful place in the county, was shut up. It was the home of the Carshaltons, an ancient family who had lived in Blankshire since the Conquest, and whose riches and splendour had only increased in modern times. The

family came to an end, however, if its riches did not, and only one girl was left to inherit Hatton Towers and all the other places and possessions of the Carshaltons. She had married, when very young, the Duke of Beverley, a man approaching middle age, attractive and handsome, but with the worst reputation in London. The Duke, at that time nearly ruined by his various follies, met Mary Carshalton one day at a country house, and in a short time so captivated her that she insisted upon marrying him against the wishes of her mother, her guardians, and every one who took an interest in her. All they could do was to insist that nearly all her large fortune should be settled upon herself, and at her death

upon her eldest son. For about a year she found some happiness ; then the Duke tired of her, and resumed his old habits, leaving her quite neglected, and only occasionally coming to her for money. She was weak, and she still cared for her graceless husband, and gave him all he asked. But by degrees her health failed her, her wish to live departed, and she faded slowly away. Her death angered the Duke more than anything in her life, for with it the supplies stopped ; the money was all tied up until his son Hugo, Lord Wastwater, should come of age, and the Duke could not get at a penny of it. He hated the sight of the boy, who he said had robbed him ; and after making arrangements for his school and university career,

for which the trustees paid, he went to live abroad. Hugo grew up uncared for and unloved. He was handed from tutor to tutor, sometimes living with one guardian and sometimes with another, and no one tried to make friends with him or to influence him. One of his guardians was an unmarried man living in London, who was simply bored by the boy; while the other was a rich worldly man with a still more worldly wife, who made up to him, spoilt him, and flattered him. At last he went to Oxford, and here for the first time he was happy. Gifted with great ability, brilliant in conversation, good-looking, and rich, he seemed to have everything heart could desire, and, unlike some men in his position, he chose to work. His friends

considered him as one of the most promising men of the day, and Hugo, Earl of Wastwater, was cited as a proof that the aristocracy of England had preserved all its old qualities, and that it was possible to be an eldest son and yet an intellectual being. When he came of age the festivities were on an enormous scale, and the rejoicings at Hatton Towers and at the other country places possessed by him and his father lasted for weeks. The Duke returned from abroad, and for a while all was well. But the Duke soon asked for money, which his son gave him ; then for more, till at last, and after repeated requests had been granted, Lord Wastwater agreed to settle a certain annual sum on his father. Before long, however, there came

another demand, the result of which was a violent quarrel, and the Duke and his son parted, vowing never to meet again.

Lord Wastwater was fitted for many things, but he was not fitted for managing large estates and for the various duties of an English landowner. After a few months' experience of Blankshire, he was bored to death. “If those excellent trustees had only mismanaged the property and left it to me to bring round,” he said one day when talking to a friend, “I could have borne it; but as it is, what can a man find to do? Blankshire is just about a century behind the rest of the world; the dulnesss of its inhabitants is simply abnormal. What am I to do, Payne? You tell me not to race, but what else can I

do?" His friend urged him to take to politics. "Yes, and just as I get interested, the Duke will die, and I shall be a Peer. There's only one place duller than Blankshire, and that's the House of Lords. Besides, I don't care a rap which party is in and which out; the result is always just the same. No, I shall keep race-horses." And he did, and, as usual, success attended him, till he tired of Newmarket and of London as he had tired of Blankshire, and went abroad. For the next twelve years he passed through very strange vicissitudes. He began by travelling through all the out-of-the-way countries he could think of, and he tried to live the life of each. He spent some time among the gold-diggers

of California, and was lucky in finding gold ; but he was robbed and nearly killed on his way from the gold-fields, and escaped almost by a miracle. Then he became a cow-boy, and for a year lived as roughly as ever man did before, till he tired of the discomfort and hardship, and went off to an island in the South Pacific, where months of lazy, luxurious idleness made up to him for the discipline he had gone through. In this island he was the only white man, and the natives, a gentle race, treated him almost like a god. Then he fitted out a privateer, and went off to take part in one of the constant wars in South America ; but after a good deal of fighting he was wounded and taken prisoner, and detained in cap-

tivity until the war ended. Thus the years went on, and his life was passed alternately in wild adventures, and in long sojourns on his island, spent sometimes in hard study, sometimes in dreamy idleness. There was nothing on earth which Lord Wastwater would not have attempted had it been possible, but he did nothing for long. One occupation after another pleased him for a time, but for a time only; and at last, one day, after a long residence on the island in the warm Pacific sea, he resolved to go home to England.

There was a commotion in Blankshire when the news was known. People had got to look on Lord Wastwater as a sort of monster, for reports of his doings had

occasionally reached England, and had penetrated to Blankshire in a form which was exaggerated even for county gossip. Indeed, a perfect mythology had grown up about him; it was said that he had become a cannibal, a Mahometan, that in Hayti he had taken part in the rites of the Vaudoo, and much more. Even in London there was considerable excitement, and people looked with interest at Wastwater House, and wondered about its owner. When he appeared, however, there was some disappointment. He looked neither like a pirate nor a sultan. He was tall, with thick light curly hair, deep-set grey-blue eyes, and a full fair beard. His features were well cut, and his only peculiarity was a certain immobility of

expression and manner which made him appear difficult of access. But he was obviously an agreeable and highly cultivated gentleman; and after he had given a few shooting-parties at Hatton Towers, and a ball or two at Wastwater House, society was ready to make a hero of him and to give him its daughters in marriage. Only in Blankshire some suspicion still reigned, and the good squires and their wives showed a certain distrust of him. But even this was disappearing by degrees, and all the stories of his doings abroad were beginning to be looked upon as fables.

With Lord Wastwater there lived as secretary a young fellow who had just left Oxford, named Frank Murchison.

Frank's father, who held a post in one of the colonies, had on one occasion been of some service to Lord Wastwater, and on hearing by chance of his return to England, wrote to ask him to interest himself in his son. Lord Wastwater saw the young man and liked him, and offered to take him as his secretary until he should find some permanent occupation. Frank, who was a good honest young fellow, with fair abilities and a strong character, liked his employment well enough ; the life was interesting, the work light, and Lord Wastwater was a pleasant master.

About a mile from Hatton Towers, in a small house belonging to Lord Wastwater, lived one of the few people he cared to see in Blankshire. This was Mr De Lisle, an

old scholar and student, whose life had been passed with books, and who cared for nothing else in the world except his daughter Patience. He had been twice married: his first wife had died on giving birth to a son, and some ten years after he had married the Hon. Edith Treblazon, a sister of Lord St Buryans, afterwards created Earl of Marazion. By her he had one daughter, Patience, who at the time of Lord Wastwater's return to England was about eighteen years of age.

Of Patience and Mr De Lisle Lord Wastwater saw much. Whenever he was alone at Hatton Towers, he would persuade the old man to come and dine with him, and the evening would be spent in the

library discussing curious books and old editions. The old student interested Lord Wastwater, while he in his turn was delighted to find some one who would listen to him, and still more, to have the splendid old library of Hatton Towers at his disposal. Patience, too, whose education had been a strange one, and had fitted her to appreciate medieval more than modern literature, enjoyed the evenings; while Frank was interested in Patience, and this feeling kept him agreeably occupied, when perhaps his eagerness to pore over folios might have flagged. So things went pleasantly enough at Hatton Towers when Lord Wastwater was there. Little by little he had got to like old Mr De Lisle, and by degrees told him much of his life

abroad, and of his efforts to find some abiding interest.

Such conversations grew more frequent as time went on, and Lord Wastwater became more intimate with the old student. Sometimes, while he watched the keen pleasure with which Mr De Lisle handled the old books, as if only to touch them were a joy, he would burst out into scornful remarks about his own indifference, the emptiness and dulness of life. “I declare,” he said one day, as he saw the old man’s almost reverent delight in a manuscript of one of Roger Bacon’s scientific treatises, which he had just taken off a shelf of rarities, “I envy your life. You at least find interest in something ; there is nothing on earth that I want to do, or ever shall want to do.”

The old man looked at Lord Wastwater with indignation in his eyes. "It is shameful that you should talk like that," he said: "look at these books; there is enough here to interest a man during ten lives. Ah, what wouldn't I give for a few more years! This is a book which I have never even seen, and I am so old I cannot live long." He opened the pages and peered at them through his spectacles. "You are little more than forty, you could do so much, and you talk of finding nothing to interest you. It is shameful." He bent down over the book again, and Lord Wastwater looked at the shrunken old figure with a curious expression.

"Well, I would willingly change places with you," he said, "you are old and you

want to live longer. I suppose I have another thirty years before me, perhaps more, for my father is ninety, and what to do with them I don't know." He turned carelessly to the table and took up a volume. "There, if you want to see the book which interests me most, it is this."

The old man carefully put down Roger Bacon, and took the book Lord Wastwater gave him. In a moment he threw it contemptuously aside.

"'Nihilism!' absurd; what is there interesting in that?"

"Simply that sometimes I think I shall become a Nihilist," said Lord Wastwater.

Mr De Lisle looked at him. "You are laughing at me, I suppose," he said.

“Not at all. These men seem to have a very exciting time, and I am told that the expectation of life amongst the ‘unlawful people’ as they are called, doesn’t exceed two years. Think of that.”

“If you want to die,” said the other composedly, “which I don’t believe, why don’t you shoot yourself? It’s simpler.”

“Suicide?” said Lord Wastwater thoughtfully, “of course it has often been in my mind, but to tell you the truth, suicide seems to me so dull. There is no intellectual interest in merely getting rid of life. I don’t mean that it’s conventional, that’s not it; I’d just as soon do what is conventional as what is not; but it is dull.” After a pause, he continued with a laugh, “Unluckily I can’t hand over

my odd years to you, or that might make a difference."

"I see," said Mr De Lisle, "you would like to manufacture out of death the excitement you fail to find in life. You might as well try to square the circle. But this is nonsense. Come and look at this splendid copy of Marsilio Ficino."

The intimacy, however, was destined to last very little longer. The poor old scholar caught a chill one cold autumn evening, and in a few days his life and his learning came to an end together. The little home was of course broken up, for Patience could not live there alone, and her brother Bobby, who was in a Government office, was kept most of the year in London. Besides, they were not

very great friends. Patience was very poor, for her father's money all went to Bobby, and she was left with about £100 a-year. Her aunt, Mrs Dearing, however, came to the rescue and carried her off to live with her in London. Mrs Dearing was her mother's sister. As the Hon. Almira Treblazon she had lived for nearly forty years in single blessedness, and had then married a rich cotton-spinner, who was anxious to ally himself with the noble and ancient house of Treblazon. After a happy and uneventful married life of fifteen years, the cotton-spinner died, leaving his widow with some £8000 a-year. All this money, except a sum of £1000 a-year, however, was to be lost to her in the event of a second marriage,—a provision

which Mrs Dearing was disposed at first to resent, but to which she afterwards reconciled herself. For some years she had been in the habit of inviting her friends' daughters to stay with her in London, and prided herself very justly on the advantageous marriages they had all made while under her care. She was a kind, fat, good-humoured lady, with hair that was rather too black for her age, and a set of admirable false teeth. To her house Patience now betook herself as her home. The change was very great. To the quiet country life, varied at most by an occasional garden-party, and perhaps twice a-year by a ball, succeeded all the bustle and racket of London. Mrs Dearing loved society, and even Patience's

deep mourning could not keep her in check. So there had been many dinner-parties and tea-parties in the house in Berkeley Square during the winter, and now that the spring had begun Mrs Dearing was looking forward to a brilliant season. For Patience was distinctly a pleasant girl to take out. Although not exactly beautiful, she possessed the far more important quality of charm. She was tall, with reddish-brown hair, grey eyes, and well-formed features, but her chief beauty lay in her figure and in the carriage of her head, which was set on her shoulders in such a way as to give a queenly air to her appearance. She was clever and bright, and, considering her quiet country life, strangely at home

in society. But she had been accustomed to attention whenever she did appear in Blankshire, and the intimacy of the past two years with Lord Wastwater had helped to form her and give her assurance. So Mrs Dearing was well satisfied with her charge, and began to fear that her marriage might come all too soon. Patience, however, gave no sign of desiring this. She had plenty of friends, but never seemed to wish them to be more. She had already refused two very possible men, and marriage was apparently far from her thoughts. Thus the months passed on, till it was the very end of May, and the two ladies had just returned to town after the Whitsuntide holidays.

## CHAPTER II.

## PATIENCE IN LONDON.

IT was the night of one of the Richter concerts. Mrs Dearing did not much care for music, but Patience was devoted to it, and her aunt therefore resigned herself to being bored. They had stalls in the balcony at St James's Hall, and two or three friends were near them,—Lord and Lady Marazion in the row behind, and Lord Wastwater and Frank not far off. On this particular night Patience had been anxiously watching her aunt

during the performance of the scene between the hero and Mime in Wagner's Siegfried. The duet was long and uninteresting to some people, and of these Mrs Dearing was one. The good lady dropped off to sleep once or twice, then she woke up, rustled her programme, read sentences of it here and there, and went off to sleep again. At last the first part ended, to Patience's relief, and Mrs Dearing said, "Well, my dear, I suppose it's very pretty, but I confess I prefer something with a little more tune. How nice it would be now if some one would get up and sing 'The Last Rose of Summer, or 'Robin Adair'!"

Patience laughed. "That scene is rather trying," she said, "but you know

you like Wagner sometimes: there is the overture to *Tannhäuser*."

"Oh, of course, that's beautiful," returned her aunt, "only there is so much more sound in an orchestra: but here's Jane coming to speak to me. I wonder what she wants."

Lady Marazion, who now approached, was a tall, gaunt, sallow woman, who always dressed in unbecoming colours. She was a rigid person, who took severe views of other people, and thereby kept up a high standard for herself. The only individual she cared much about was her son, Lord St Buryans, and for him she showed a weakness of which he took full advantage.

It appeared that she wanted to talk

to Mrs Dearing about a servant, and Patience, finding the conversation dull, turned away to look for other amusement. She soon saw that Murchison was making his way towards her, and she welcomed him gladly, "It is a long time since I have seen you," she said.

The new-comer was of middle height and square build. He had dark hair and moustache, and kindly brown eyes, which lighted up as Patience spoke to him.

"I have been with Lord Wastwater in Ireland, and at Hatton Towers, and we only returned to London to-day, or I should have come to see you," he answered.

She smiled, "And where is Lord Wastwater?"

“Oh, he went down-stairs to speak to some one ; he will be back directly. How do you like the concert ?” he said.

“I like it very much ; but my poor aunt !” said Patience, with a comical look at Mrs Dearing, “I thought she would have died of Siegfried and Mime’s long conversation. However, we shall do better in the second part. She will think she likes the Fifth Symphony even if she doesn’t, because she knows one ought to admire Beethoven.”

They went on talking, he leaning over the seat just behind Patience. Mrs Dearing, who had finished her conversation, now turned towards them, and suddenly her face assumed an expression of interest it had not had before. She looked

sharply at Frank, then at Patience, then back again at Frank, and then proceeded to interrupt the conversation. “Where is Lord Wastwater?” she asked.

“Gone down-stairs,” returned Frank; “we were just talking of him.”

“I always expect to hear he has gone off to the North Pole or somewhere, if I don’t see him,” said Mrs Dearing.

“Oh, we have only been in Blankshire, doing nothing particular.”

“Who has our old house now?” asked Patience.

“A retired navy captain, with eleven children. You would not know the place again if you saw it.”

“I don’t want to see it,” said Patience, with a sigh, “and I don’t suppose I shall.”

“But you will be coming to stay at Hatton Towers this summer, shan’t you?” he asked, eagerly.

“Our summer plans are quite undecided as yet,” returned Mrs Dearing, with some coldness in her manner; “sometimes I think that we may go to America. Patience and I were talking of it the other day.”

He was beginning to exclaim, when they were interrupted by a short fat man with sleek black hair and a curled black moustache, who came up to them, and after shaking hands effusively with Mrs Dearing and Patience, said to the latter, “May I hope to see you at my party on Wednesday afternoon?”

“I don’t know,” said Patience, looking

at him with a hostile glance, “I haven’t heard what are my aunt’s engagements.”

“Oh, you positively must come; I have Tschainovsky and lots of delightful musicians. Mrs Dearing, I entreat you to bring your niece, Wednesday afternoon, —now, you won’t forget.”

“I can’t tell for certain, Mr Goldstein,” said Mrs Dearing; “but we hope to come. Your parties are always perfect.”

Mr Goldstein laughed softly, and let his eyes rest on Patience with a look of admiration.

“I hate him,” she said in a whisper to Murchison. “Can’t you take him away?” And she turned from the new-comer and looked over the hall, as if trying to recognise some friend. Fortunately for her the

conversation came to an end, for the first notes of the orchestra warned every one to return to their seats. But Patience whispered to Mrs Dearing, "We are not going, are we? I can't bear him or his parties."

"Well," said her aunt, doubtfully, "you see his parties are very smart, my dear; many people would give their eyes to go. And he is a cousin of the Treblazons and all. I think we ought just to look in. But we'll see when the day comes."

The concert went on and ended, and at its close Lord Wastwater and Frank came to see Mrs Dearing and Patience to their carriage. After they had driven away, Lord Wastwater said, "I'm going home, Frank. I'm asked to three parties and two balls

to-night. It is unendurable. Come back with me. Or do you want to go and amuse yourself somewhere?"

"Not at all," answered Frank in a gloomy voice, as they emerged into Piccadilly. Lord Wastwater looked at him for an instant, and then they walked on for some way in silence.

Presently Lord Wastwater began, "I saw you talking to Miss De Lisle to-night. Is she well?"

"Quite well," returned Frank. "She asked where you were; she wanted to see you, I think."

"Oh, I wouldn't interrupt," said Lord Wastwater, with a short laugh.

"There was nothing to interrupt," said Frank; "and sometimes I think there never will be."

“Can’t tell whether she likes you, eh?”

“Not in the least.”

“Nonsense,” said Lord Wastwater; “any sensible man knows if a woman likes him or not, unless she is trying to deceive him. And Patience won’t do that sort of thing.”

“Still it is true that I don’t know,” replied Frank, with some irritation in his voice.

“Why don’t you ask her then?” said Lord Wastwater.

Frank was silent for a moment, then burst out, “How can I, a penniless fellow like me?”

“If she likes you, she won’t care about that. Besides, money need be no difficulty. I should like to see Patience happily mar-

ried, and you too. If you would only let me——”

“But I won’t,” interrupted Frank. “I can’t let you give me money, Lord Wastwater. I know you would ; you are very generous to me, but I can’t take it.”

“It’s not very generous to give away what I don’t the least want,” said Lord Wastwater. “But have it your own way. We must find you something to do, that’s all. And by the by, Frank, it’s quite true, isn’t it, that you’re that rich fellow Goldstein’s heir ?”

“Yes, it is quite true—that is, if he has no children ; but he is sure to marry.”

“Well, he may not,” said Lord Wastwater. “But where does the money come from ?”

“ His mother and mine were sisters. My grandfather left all he had to my aunt, Mrs Goldstein, who was the elder, and her descendants ; but failing direct heirs it was to return to my mother, or after her death to her descendants, of whom I am the only one. My father was expressly excluded ; my grandfather did not like him or my mother’s marriage.”

“ And you inherit everything ? ”

“ Oh no, only about £70,000 or £80,000, I should think.”

“ And who will the rest go to if he dies ? ” asked Lord Wastwater.

“ I have no idea,” returned Frank. “ He certainly won’t leave it to me.”

“ Why shouldn’t he ? Have you quarrelled ? ”

Frank hesitated. "We used to be pretty good friends, but just now I am very angry with him," he said. "There's a farmer on his estate in Wessex to whose sister he has behaved very badly. He went through a form of marriage with her, which she believed was valid."

"And of course it was nothing of the sort," said Lord Wastwater.

"Exactly; and he has deserted her."

"I am not the least surprised to hear it," said Lord Wastwater, in an indifferent voice. "But what is all this to you?"

"I happen to know the farmer, and he asked me to help him. So we are going to see Goldstein together, and try and shame him into helping the child at any rate."

Lord Wastwater burst out laughing.

“What a quixotic fellow you are, Frank ! You’ll have the trouble for nothing, and I don’t suppose the girl’s worth it.”

“It may be,” said Frank, shortly ; “but I mean to try what I can do.”

Lord Wastwater laughed again, and they walked on again in silence till they reached Wastwater House.

It was a very large house, standing some way from the street, and surrounded by a garden. The two men turned from the front door and went through a little gate in the garden - railing, and so by a side-door into the house. They passed through a passage into the entrance-hall, and then Lord Wastwater, turning into the library, said, “Come in here for a minute,

Frank, before you go to bed ; I want to talk a little more to you."

The library was a large room filled with books, its windows opened on to the garden, and just now the night air was coming in fresh and sweet with the scent of flowers. The room was very luxuriously furnished : the tables were littered with new books of all sorts, among which science predominated, and there was a mingled air of cultivation and untidiness which made it an eminently pleasant room to live in. It was sparingly lighted, however, for Lord Wastwater disliked any glare of light, and the reading-lamps with green shades only just sufficed to show that the room was large, and to cast a mysterious half-light into its recesses.

Lord Wastwater lighted a cigar, and

Frank sat down in one of the arm-chairs and looked at the fire ; but he was soon startled at hearing Lord Wastwater say, “ Has it ever occurred to you that Bobby De Lisle wants his sister to marry St Buryans ? ”

“ St Buryans ? ” said Frank in surprise. “ No ; why should he ? ”

“ Well he does, that I am sure of,” said Lord Wastwater, “ and Lady Marazion wishes it too.”

“ But Miss De Lisle has no money, nor has St Buryans.”

“ Quite true ; and the Marazion estates are all mortgaged, and the family diamonds are paste. But there is Mrs Dearing, or rather her money.”

Frank looked up aghast.

“ Do you mean that it’s a sort of arrangement ? ” he said.

“ Something like that, I believe,” said Lord Wastwater. “ Mrs Dearing has a good deal of what’s called family pride, you know, and the Treblazons are down in the world just now. Would Patience be likely to do this, do you think ? ”

“ Oh, it’s impossible,” said Frank, rising in his agitation. “ It’s absurd. A fellow like St Buryans. It’s monstrous that any one should think of such a thing.”

“ There’s not much harm in St Buryans, he’s only an ass,” said Lord Wastwater.

“ Oh, he’s,—never mind what he is,” returned Frank, walking up and down the room savagely. “ He’s certainly not fit to be Miss De Lisle’s husband, I know that.”

“Then she’ll refuse him, I suppose,” said Lord Wastwater, in a quiet voice. He was leaning against the mantelpiece, and watching Frank with a look of half-amused interest.

“I suppose so,” said Frank, stopping and looking at him.

“But as her relations will be pressing on this marriage, don’t you think you had better let her know your feelings?” said Lord Wastwater.

Frank thought for a minute. “I see,” he said; “you think I ought to tell her? But how can I with no money?”

“Oh, you shall have something to do before long. I’ll use what they call my interest. And Frank, for the future, supposing Mrs Dearing doesn’t leave her any money, it

won't matter. I have left her £100,000 in my will."

"You have!" exclaimed Frank.

"Well, why not?" asked Lord Wastwater with surprise.

"Oh, I don't know, only you have always said you would not leave your money to any one."

Lord Wastwater laughed. "A hundred thousand pounds isn't my money," he said. "It's a sum which will hurt no one. I shall let the Crown or whoever likes to have it take the rest, unless the Duke outlives me, which is very likely. It's only a curse to me. If I'd had my own way to make, life would probably have interested me. As it is,—however, never mind that old story."

There was a pained look in Frank's eyes as he glanced at him, and he said, "Your life will be a long one still I hope, in spite of that."

"Perhaps," said Lord Wastwater, "but you are in question just now. Take my advice. Ask her."

There was a pause. "The fact is, I suppose I'm afraid," Frank replied.

"You will gain nothing by waiting," said Lord Wastwater.

"Lord Wastwater, do you think she likes me?" Frank asked. "You know her very well."

"Hardly well enough for that," he returned. "But she always seems glad to talk to me, and we often talk of you."

Frank looked disappointed, but he said

no more, and lighting his candle he went off to bed. Lord Wastwater watched him as he left the room, then shrugging his shoulders he sat down, drew the lamp near him and plunged into a modern German scientific work.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE MARAZIONS AT HOME.

THE day after the Richter concert Mrs Dearing was having tea with Lady Marazion.

The Marazions lived in Arundel Street, Mayfair. Old as was their pedigree, and blue as was their blood, the Lords St Buryans had never possessed wealth or importance enough to own one of the large London houses, palaces standing in gardens which were worth so much a foot. This fact much annoyed Mrs Dearing, and she

was wont to say that if people went by age there ought to be a St Buryans House instead of a Hackney or Silchester House. However that might be, the house which Lord Marazion now occupied was small, with nothing particular to recommend it. The drawing-room especially was an uninviting room. Lady Marazion detested the modern fashion of filling up the space with small tables and knick-knacks, and her rooms were furnished according to the taste of a past age. The walls were papered so as to resemble panels, white and lilac, with a little gold; red stuff curtains hung at the windows, and the chairs and sofas were covered with the same material. In the middle of the room stood a mahogany table with a few books, the 'Peerage,'

Whitaker's Almanack, and an illustrated edition of 'Evangeline' in a fancy cloth binding; while in a book-slide were the series of 'Painters,' of 'Men of Letters,' &c. Although it was spring the air was very chilly, and a small fire was burning in the grate; near it was the tea-table, at which there were sitting Lord and Lady Marazion and Mrs Dearing. Lord Marazion, who was about fifty-five years of age, was a man of ordinary capacity, and in no way remarkable. But his courtesy and tact had obtained for him a position perhaps above his merits; and although he had never occupied more than a subordinate post in the Government, his success in concluding a treaty, which had been for the most part drawn up and

arranged by others, was rewarded by the thanks of a grateful country, and an earldom.

Mrs Dearing finished her cup of tea and looked into the fire. The talk had been of desultory subjects, but it had gradually died down till there was silence. Mrs Dearing had, however, evidently something in her mind which she wished to say before going, and at last she began—

“Jane, I have been hearing some rather disquieting things about St Buryans lately.”

Lady Marazion looked up from her knitting. “What have you heard?” she asked, with a shade of anxiety in her tone.

“Well, I’ve heard that he’s very much in debt,” said Mrs Dearing, lowering her voice.

“I fear that is so,” said Lord Marazion.

“A few days ago I received a large bill from a tradesman which had been running some time, and I much fear that is not the only one.”

“He has not a very large allowance,” said Lady Marazion.

“It is as large as I can give him,” replied Lord Marazion, with a sigh.

“I am sure he will be all right when he marries,” said Lady Marazion. “A nice girl with some money will soon make him quite steady.”

Mrs Dearing looked doubtfully at her. “Then I hear he has bad friends,” she went on. “There’s that Lord Plantagenet Tudor, who had the quarrel with Mr Murfield about the ballet-dancer, you know, Jane,”—and she paused for a reply.

“No; I never hear these things,” said Lady Marazion, stiffly. “I don’t wish to hear them.”

“I should have thought you ought to know things which happen to your son,” rejoined Mrs Dearing with some asperity.

Lady Marazion looked annoyed.

“I think it is best for women to be ignorant,” she said. “It is the best way to insure the purity of homes.”

“H—m,” said Mrs Dearing, “well it don’t always seem to answer. Anyhow, this is quite true. I don’t think St Buryans’ friends are nice men.”

“I suppose they are like other young men, Almira, and I tell you he will be steadier when he marries.”

“I hope so,” said Mrs Dearing.

“Especially if our cherished plan comes off, and he marries Patience,” said Lord Marazion.

“Yes, that’s just it,” said Mrs Dearing. “I want Patience’s husband to be very nice and good. I don’t want her to marry a man in order to steady him.”

“I don’t think you are very kind about your own nephew, Almira,” said Lady Marazion.

“Well,” said Mrs Dearing, ignoring the last remark, “I think Patience is not unlikely to settle the matter by herself,” and she nodded her head.

“What do you mean?” asked Lady Marazion.

“I think she is in love,” said Mrs Dearing.

“And pray, with whom?” inquired Lady Marazion.

“With young Murchison, Lord Wastwater’s secretary.”

“But he has not a penny,” said Lady Marazion.

“No; but Patience would never think of that,” replied Mrs Dearing.

“That is all the more reason for prudence on your part, Almira,” retorted Lord Marazion. “But are you sure it is so?” he continued.

“Well,” said Mrs Dearing, settling herself in her chair, for it was this she had come to say, and she was glad it was over—“well, I have thought for some time that she was rather preoccupied, but I never really suspected any-

thing till last night at the concert, when Murchison's manner was unmistakable."

"And what about her?" asked Lord Marazion.

"She seemed very well pleased. Of course, you know, they used to spend hours together at Hatton Towers, when poor dear Mr De Lisle was talking about musty old books with Lord Wastwater. He was a very silly old man, and never thought about his daughter."

"And this is the result," said Lord Marazion. "It is lamentable."

"I wanted to be sure," went on Mrs Dearing, "so this morning I thought I would lay a trap for Patience. I said I wondered how Murchison could be content to live with Lord Wastwater and

do nothing, and she fired up,—you know how she looks when she is angry, Jane?" and she looked at Lady Marazion.

"No," answered that lady curtly. "She has never forgotten herself with me."

"Ah, well, she has with me, often. At any rate she was very cross this morning. So there it is. Of course he has nothing; but I can help, and perhaps Lord Wastwater may do something for him."

"Does Lord Wastwater wish for the marriage?" asked Lord Marazion.

"Oh, I can't tell. It's very likely; he's devoted to young Murchison. I think it's such a pity Lord Wastwater doesn't marry her himself."

"Almira!" said Lady Marazion. "He's an unbeliever."

“ Is he, my dear ? Well I daresay she’d be able to put that right too, like St Buryans’ unsteadiness, you know.”

Lady Marazion took no notice of this hit, and went on, “ I should be very sorry if any niece of mine were to marry Lord Wastwater. I think he is a most doubtful, unsatisfactory person.”

“ The son of a duke, Jane, with £60,000 a-year. He has a right to be odd.”

“ I did not say odd, Almira. Just think of the stories one used to hear of him.”

“ Oh, well,” said Mrs Dearing with some contempt, “ really all that may be forgotten. People said he was a Mahometan, and a cannibal, and I don’t know what. He doesn’t look like it, and I’m

sure he's a most courteous and agreeable man."

"He is a very strange one," said Lord Marazion; "he does not take the interest in politics which one might expect from a man in his position, and social questions do not seem to appeal to him either. I do not understand him."

"It isn't every one who is as public-spirited as you are, Marazion," said Mrs Dearing, "and at any rate he is not dull. There is no heir to the title is there?" she continued rather quickly.

"I believe not," answered her brother. "This man and his father are the only two left of the family."

"What is happening to the old Duke?" said Mrs Dearing.

“He lives in his place up in Yorkshire, I believe,” returned Lord Marazion. “No one ever sees him now, and he and Lord Wastwater are not good friends.”

“I remember him well enough thirty years ago,” said Mrs Dearing, “and his reputation was execrable. I wonder what he is like now! Well, well,” she went on, “I think Lord Wastwater had much better marry and have an heir.”

“One would really think you wanted to marry him yourself, Almira,” said Lady Marazion.

“I am too old, my dear, and too ugly,” returned Mrs Dearing. “But to return to St Buryans. If there is any chance of his getting Patience to care for him he had better be quick, for I’m sure she

don't care about him now. And, of course, in many ways I should like the marriage. You had better tell him to pay her more decided attention."

"I will," answered Lady Marazion. "St Buryans is a dear, and is so easily guided, he is sure to do what I wish. But here he is," she went on, as the door opened and a light-haired, weak-looking youth entered the room. "Come, St Buryans, we were just talking of you."

"And what were you saying?" he asked, after greeting his aunt and pouring out some tea.

"We were saying that you must be more demonstrative to Patience if you want her to care for you," said Mrs Dearing. "You don't half make love, St

Buryans. You should bring her flowers, and give her books, and press her hand, and so on. You treat her just like any other cousin. Be a little warmer in your manner."

Lady Marazion had listened with some disapproval. "I think it is possible to overdo that sort of thing," she said. "I don't want St Buryans to make love like the footman."

St Buryans giggled, and Mrs Dearing said, "Well, dear Jane, I don't know how Marazion made love to you," and she looked doubtfully at the rather angular form of her sister-in-law; "all I can say is, girls nowadays like a little more warmth and devotion. Why, St Buryans might as well be a Frenchman at once,

and send his father to propose for him in his dress clothes. You are in love with her, I suppose," she said, turning sharply to St Buryans.

St Buryans seemed a little confused at this sudden attack, but he caught sight of his mother's face over Mrs Dearing's shoulder, and hastily said, "Oh yes, Aunt Almira, I do want to marry her very much indeed, of course I do. Only——"

"Only what?" asked Mrs Dearing.

"It's a little soon to marry, isn't it? I'm only twenty-three."

"And you want to go about with Lord Plantagenet Tudor and the rest of your friends, I suppose," said Mrs Dearing, severely.

St Buryans saw he was getting into difficulties, and although, being ignorant of the conversation which had preceded his arrival, he did not clearly understand why, he hastened to put himself right by saying, "I'll propose to Patience the first time I have a chance, Aunt Almira."

"That's right," said his mother, encouragingly. Mrs Dearing, however, shook her head. "It won't do to be too abrupt with her," she said. "However, I suppose you know best. I shan't so very much mind if she does refuse him," she thought to herself. And she took her leave, with more doubt about the plan than she had hitherto felt. She went round by the club by appointment to call for Bobby, who was to take her to a shop in the

city. Full of her new idea about Murchison, she propounded it to Bobby, and was surprised at the strenuous opposition he offered. He refused at first to believe that Patience could ever care for him ; and when Mrs Dearing pointed out that when two people are left together in a country house they usually fall in love, he began to abuse his father's shortsightedness in no measured terms. Bobby and old Mr De Lisle had never been kindred spirits. Bobby's love of society and frivolous amusements had been a source of wonder and contempt to the old man, while the son in his turn was bored to death with his father's pursuits, his studies of musty old parchments, and his general book-grubbing, as he called it.

His failure to appreciate Mr De Lisle had often irritated Patience, and Mrs Dearing was perfectly aware that Bobby's disapproval was, if anything, likely to make Patience persist in the course to which he objected. So she endeavoured to calm him down, with but doubtful success, however. And he announced his intention of coming home with her and speaking to Patience at once.

“I shall tell her she is not to see the fellow,” he said. “I shall forbid him the house.”

As they drew up before Mrs Dearing’s house, he ran out and asked the footman if Miss De Lisle was at home.

The man said yes, and Bobby, without noticing that he wished to add something,

ran up the stairs, and entered the drawing-room. There, to his great annoyance, he saw Murchison standing by the chimney-piece with Patience, talking earnestly to her, and holding her hand.

## CHAPTER IV.

## MURCHISON'S VENTURE.

THE interview had not, however, proceeded as Bobby rather naturally suspected. Emboldened by Lord Wastwater's encouragement the evening before, Frank had, after much reflection and an almost sleepless night, resolved to put his fortune to the touch. For nearly three years he had loved Patience, and he was determined to know whether his faithful constancy was to be rewarded or not. He was not very confident, but he had begun to feel that

the present state of uncertainty was intolerable. He came to the house late in the afternoon hoping to find Patience, and to his delight he was told that Mrs Dearing was out, and Miss De Lisle at home.

Patience rose to receive him with marked pleasure. "I am so glad you have come," she said. "My aunt is out shopping with Bobby, and I am all alone, so we can have a good talk."

The pleasure was almost too marked, the welcome too natural. Frank's heart fell a little. He sat down by her side on the sofa. "I have come for a special reason to-day," he said.

"Really,—what is it? Do you want me to do anything?" And she looked up at him, but her eyes saw that which

made her feel uneasy, and she went on hurriedly, “I want to hear all about your time in Ireland, and at Hatton Towers, too.”

“But I don’t want to talk about that.”

“Oh, but you must, there’s such lots I want to hear. How is old Mr Micklethwaite, and my dear friends the Winch-combes, and are there——?”

She stopped, conscious that he was making no response, and he went on—

“I will tell you all, but not now. I want to ask you, I want to say—I know I have no right to come to you, no right at all, only I can stand the uncertainty no longer.” He was speaking almost at random, hardly knowing what he said. She looked up at him with an expression in her eyes which deceived him, for pity

is much akin to love, and letting himself go entirely, he seized her hands.

“Patience, darling, I love you,” he said,—

“I love you with my whole being.”

But he had hardly spoken the words before he saw his mistake: there was no answer in her eyes, her hands were drawn away from his. For a second no word was said, then she buried her face in her hands. “Oh, I am so sorry; I am so sorry,” she half sobbed.

He stood quietly looking at her. Then, “Is it quite impossible?” he asked.

“Quite, quite impossible. Believe me,” and her look met his in earnest sorrow, —“believe me, I had no notion till to-day that you were thinking of—of this. I thought we were good friends.”

“Friends!” he said; “so we are, only my hopes were higher. But are you sure? I have startled you,—perhaps if I had waited? May I come again?”

She shook her head. “It is no use,” she said. “I like you, and I trust you, and I believe in you; but I cannot marry you.”

He drew a long breath between his teeth. “Is there—I have no right to ask, but perhaps you will tell me—is there any one else?”

“No, no one,” she said, in a low voice; “but do not take hope from that. My dear friend,” she went on, “believe me, give up this wish, you will find some one else who is more worthy of you. You ought to be happy.” She ended with a half sob. He turned away and went to

the window. It had begun to rain, and the street looked dismal and gloomy. A carriage was driving up to the door. With a sigh he came back. "I will always be your friend," he said, gravely, "and you will let me see you sometimes, won't you?"

"Oh yes, yes, but I shall wish it," and she took his hand.

Just then the door opened, and Bobby entered. He looked searchingly from one to the other, and then said in a tone of surprise, "You here, Murchison! Have you come to see my aunt?"

Frank recovered himself with an effort. "I came to see Miss De Lisle," he answered. "She wanted to hear about our stay at Hatton Towers."

“Oh, Hatton Towers,” said Bobby, slightly mollified; “yes, you’ve been there with Wastwater, I believe. All well there?”

“Yes; only Mr Murchison says there is a retired navy captain with eleven small children living in our house,” said Patience, laughing. “Isn’t it dreadful, Bobby?”

Again Bobby looked at her. The merriment seemed a little forced, and he became suspicious once more.

“Nearly time to dress,” he said, looking at his watch. “Are you dining out to-night, Murchison?”

“I? No, I am dining at home. I’ve an appointment late this evening.”

“Ah, well, I’m dining with Goldstein,

at eight sharp, and I shall have to go directly and dress."

Frank took the hint. "Good-bye," he said. "Good-bye, Miss De Lisle." He held her hand a second and was gone.

Patience stood looking on the ground: her heart was wrung with pity for him, and she could not but feel remorseful. Was it her fault that he had made this mistake? Had she encouraged him too much—been too friendly with him? Her meditations were interrupted somewhat harshly by Bobby, who said, "Come, Patience, what are you thinking of? That fellow who's just gone?"

"Well, and what if I were?" she replied, looking up at him coolly.

"Why, you'd better leave off, that's all."

“What do you mean?”

“Aunt Almira thinks you are too much interested in him. And that’s a mistake, do you understand?”

She had been standing looking into the fire, now she faced round. “Why is it a mistake?” she said.

“Because you can’t marry without my consent, and you won’t have it.”

“And who talked of marriage?” she asked, the rising colour in her checks showing her irritation.

“I thought, perhaps, Murchison had,” answered Bobby.

The rejoinder placed her in a difficult position. She was determined not to admit that she had refused Frank, and so allow Bobby to triumph over him, and

yet she could not make up her mind to tell a lie, so she said—

“ You can only stop my marrying till I’m twenty-one ; after that——”

“ Oh, after that you can marry if you like, and be cut by the whole family. But it’s not for a year, and by that time many things may have happened.” And Bobby stretched himself out comfortably on the sofa.

“ Why should you object to my marrying him ? ” she asked, with suspicious coolness.

“ Because he hasn’t got a penny, and because I dislike him, and because—oh well, because I think he won’t make you a good husband. Isn’t that enough ? ”

Patience had listened to this sneering

speech with rising anger, and she now completely lost her temper. She came close to Bobby and looked at him with flashing eyes.

“And why should I care what you think or who you dislike?” she said. “Frank Murchison would be a perfect husband for any woman. Why should you dictate to me, Bobby, I should like to know?”

She threw back her head and looked down at him contemptuously.

“I shall dictate to you because I’m your guardian, that’s why,” rejoined Bobby, coolly. “My father wasn’t a very wise man, but he wasn’t silly enough to let you be your own mistress — that’s one comfort.”

She turned on him as if she would have struck him. "How dare you speak of my father like that—you, who were utterly unworthy of him, but for whose sake he pinched himself over and over again."

"There, that's enough," said Bobby, getting up, and now thoroughly angry in his turn. "We'll talk no more about this, but you understand me,—you're not to see that man again, he's not to come here, and you're not to meet him. Do you hear, Aunt Almira?" he went on to Mrs Dearing, who had just then entered the room.

"What's the matter?" said that lady, who had remained standing in the doorway. "You seem quite excited; and as to Patience, her eyes are flashing like a

green parrot. What are you quarrelling about?"

"Bobby says I'm not to see Mr Murchison!" exclaimed Patience.

Mrs Dearing turned to Bobby, who had risen, and was looking angrily at Patience. "She is not to see Murchison or meet him; he shan't come here," he said.

Patience forced herself to speak calmly. "Look here, Bobby," she said; "I don't mean to marry Mr Murchison, but I don't mean to leave off seeing him. I shall remain friends with him whatever you may do." And with this she walked out of the room, without another glance at Bobby or her aunt.

"My dear Bobby," said Mrs Dearing, in a tone of consternation, "what have you

been saying to Patience? You'll never get her to do what you want if you treat her in this way."

"I'll make her," said Bobby. "She shan't see that fellow, or write to him—I'm determined she shan't. You must prevent it."

"Very well, Bobby, anything you like. But you won't make the smallest impression on her. Patience won't give way about a thing when she looks like that. You needn't suppose she will," returned Mrs Dearing, quietly.

"We'll see about that," said Bobby. "Something shall be done. I'll have my own way about this. You might take her out of town. How would that do?"

Mrs Dearing laughed loudly. "My dear Bobby, how silly you are. Why, it's the

very way to make her run away with him. Poor dear Lady Eaglethorpe took Cecilia Flyffast to the country when she was in love with Mr Caradoc, and she was gone in a fortnight. Not that Patience would run away—she would be more likely to walk to church before my very eyes."

Bobby went to the window and drummed on it impatiently with his fingers. His aunt often exasperated him, but never had she done so so much as now.

Suddenly the front door was heard to shut, and Bobby exclaimed, "There is Patience — where is she going to? By George! she's posting a letter. I wonder if it's to that fellow." And he rushed out of the room, while Mrs Dearing looked after him with a compassionate smile.

On the steps he met Patience returning.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"I have been posting a letter to Mr Murchison," she replied, and passed by him into the hall. Then she turned and said, "Now, Bobby, understand me—I shall not marry Mr Murchison, I would not even if he wished it; but he is my friend, and I won't give him up." And then she walked up-stairs, leaving Bobby silenced for once.

She went to her room and locked the door, and then she sat down on her bed to think over what had happened. She felt strangely excited at the events of the afternoon—more excited than the fact of a proposal would warrant. For it had happened to her before to have to refuse

people, but neither Captain Wingate nor Sir Lionel Gray, her two other conquests, had ever produced the strange restlessness which affected her now. It was not because she liked Frank so much better than either of the other two men. She had been sorry for them, but she would not have cared if she had seen neither of them again. Frank she wanted to keep as a friend. She was very fond of him, and she used to look forward in the old days to the meetings with him at Hatton Towers just as she now did in London. But there it ended, and she did not understand why. “I cannot marry him,” she said to herself; “I cannot, and yet—I really like him. I don’t know why it is so impossible, yet there is no one else,” and she ran through in

her mind all the admirers, actual and possible, whom she had ever had. "There is not a man in the world I like as well as Frank, except, of course, Lord Wastwater. No, I suppose I haven't the capacity for love, and I shall never marry. Well, I shall have to get on with friendship, I suppose."

## CHAPTER V.

## A DISPUTE.

BOBBY was determined to leave no stone unturned to stop the marriage between his sister and Frank. His dislike of Frank was of long standing, and it extended to Lord Wastwater. Bobby was not a very estimable member of society,—he gambled, raced, and did other things of which his father disapproved; and, as Patience had said, the old man had had to pay his debts more than once: the last time, indeed, he had only managed it with great difficulty.

Bobby's appearance was a good index to his character, for he was tall and badly made, with sloping shoulders ; his fair colourless hair was thin, and his beard hardly concealed a retreating chin, and weak peevish mouth. But he chose to think himself smart, so he looked down on his father, who, he said, knew nothing of society and its requirements, and he was disposed to consider Patience a raw country girl. When he heard of their intimacy with Lord Wastwater, he thought pityingly of that nobleman's want of proper society, and prepared himself for an eager welcome at Hatton Towers when the time came for him to go and stay with his father. But he was destined to disappointment. Lord Wastwater received all allusions to their

common London friends with calm indifference, and in reply to a question about a race-horse, snubbed Bobby one day mercilessly, and gave him to understand, although with studied courtesy, that he was only tolerated at all because he was his father's son. So after an attempt to make friends with Murchison had also entirely failed, he left Hatton Towers in disgust, vowing never to return there. Thus any idea of a marriage between Patience and Frank was profoundly distasteful to him, and he welcomed the opportunity which just occurred of annoying Frank, and through him Lord Wastwater, —for he had little doubt that the latter also wished for the marriage.

He therefore went off to Wastwater

House the morning after his conversation with Patience, determined to see Murchison and to give him his view of the matter. He guessed that Murchison was making love to Patience, and imagined that she was not indifferent to him. So in complete ignorance of the fact that things had turned out exactly as he would have wished, he entered Wastwater House. The first person he met was Lord Wastwater himself, who was crossing the hall.

“Ah,” said the latter, “were you coming to see me?”

“No, I came to see Murchison. Is he in?” answered Bobby.

“I suppose so—I have not seen him this morning. Shall I send for him, or do you want to see him alone?”

“ Well, I do—rather,” said Bobby.

“ The servant will take you to his room, then,” said Lord Wastwater. “ Ah, here comes Payne,” he went on, as another man came up the steps into the hall, “ and I want to see him alone. So good-bye, De Lisle.” And Lord Wastwater entered the library with the new-comer.

Of all the men whom he had known in youth, Payne was the only one with whom Lord Wastwater had kept up even a semblance of intimacy. He was a solicitor with a good business, and had had for years the entire management of Lord Wastwater’s affairs. At Oxford he and Lord Wastwater had been fast friends, although the affection was perhaps very largely on Payne’s side ; and he had preserved his affection unaltered

even through all Lord Wastwater's strange conduct and different vagaries. He was a short florid man, bald, with reddish whiskers, and he looked prosperous and well-to-do. He had brought with him a large bundle of papers, which he submitted for Lord Wastwater's inspection. The latter glanced at them with indifference, and then pushed them away and got up.

“Let the land to whom you like, Payne—I don't care who has it. And as for the investments, if you don't think the St Kilda Iron Company safe, well, take the money out, but don't bother me; I don't care whether it's lost or not.”

Payne looked up at him quickly, as he stood before the fire turning over the

leaves of a new book which had just arrived. The lines in his face were marked, and there was a look of age and weariness about him which Payne had not noticed before.

“ You don’t look well,” he said, abruptly.

Lord Wastwater looked up from his book. “ Don’t I? I’m quite as well as I want to be,” he replied.

“ Why in the world don’t you marry ? ” asked Payne.

Lord Wastwater laughed, a laugh which somehow grated on Payne’s nerves.

“ Marry ! ” he said. “ And who would marry me who knows me ? ”

“ Really,” said Payne, “ that is rather a foolish question.”

“ Oh, plenty of women would marry my

money and my title, of course,—that's not the difficulty. But that would hardly make my life appreciably happier, which is what you want, I suppose, Payne."

"I believe I know some one who would marry you, and with whom you would be very happy," said Payne.

"Do you?" said Lord Wastwater. "I doubt it. I am not likely to make a model husband. To begin with, I should be bored with my wife in a month, and I should show it."

"I don't believe it," said Payne.

"Well, I can't make the experiment in order to convince you, I'm afraid. Besides, I'm going away."

"Going away?" said Payne. "Where to?"

“Oh, I don’t know yet. Somewhere, anywhere. By-the-by, my will is all right, of course, Payne?”

“Of course,” returned the other. “Although I hardly call it a will to dispose of only a couple of hundred thousand pounds out of all your fortune.”

“Well, my father will have the rest if he’s alive, and he can do what he pleases. And if he’s dead,—people may fight for it. I don’t care.”

“How is the Duke?” asked Payne.

“Why ask me?” said Lord Wastwater, with a laugh. “He won’t have anything to do with me, you know. But I believe he’s as well as he deserves to be.”

“You have not been to see him for a long time, have you?” asked Payne.

“Not since just after I returned to England: after the welcome he gave me, I’m not likely to go again. He cannot forgive me for being my mother’s son and inheriting her money. And, after all, why should he?”

Payne frowned and fidgeted, and then said, “I wish you’d find something to do in England.”

“Something to do!” and he laughed again. “What nonsense. As if there were anything left. I’ve tried—what haven’t I tried? It’s too late now. Let me alone, Payne.”

Payne turned back to his papers, baffled as he usually was when he tried to move Lord Wastwater from his attitude of indifference. At this moment angry voices

were heard on the staircase, and Lord Wastwater started forward.

“Those boys have quarrelled ; I thought they would,” he said, and hastily went out. In the hall were Bobby and Frank,—Bobby at the foot of the stairs, Frank a few steps above him. The latter was evidently in a towering rage, and Bobby, who was looking white and scared, turned to Lord Wastwater with a look of relief.

“Do you intend me to be insulted in your house ?” he asked.

“Not at all,” returned Lord Wastwater, courteously. “Who has done so ?”

“Your secretary,” said Bobby, who was recovering his nerve and his colour. “He threatened to kick me out of the house unless I left it at once. We should

have had a stand-up fight in another moment."

"Fortunately I was in time to prevent that disaster," observed Lord Wastwater. "What is this?" he said to Frank, who had just descended the stairs.

"Oh, it's nothing," he returned, shortly, "nothing at all. The matter had better end."

"I cannot have people fighting in my house without noticing it," said Lord Wastwater. "De Lisle says it was imminent."

Frank seemed about to burst out again, but he controlled himself. "Fight!" he said, contemptuously.

"Come in here," said Lord Wastwater, leading the way into the dining-room,

which was on the right of the hall. “It seems to me that you both ought to apologise, for you have evidently both lost your temper. But may I not be told what the quarrel was about?”

“Certainly,” said Bobby. “I have no objection whatever. I asked Murchison not to pay any more attentions to my sister at present, and this is the way he received me.”

“You did this at Miss De Lisle’s request, I suppose?” said Lord Wastwater.

“No, not exactly,” replied Bobby. “But I am her guardian,” he went on, “and I do not approve of her marrying a man with no money, which is Murchison’s case.”

“Quite right,” said Lord Wastwater;

“but of course, he may get money in some way or other. I am trying to find a post for him now. Is this your only objection?”

Murchison was about to speak, but Lord Wastwater silenced him.

“No, not quite,” said Bobby, “but it is my main objection.”

“Well, then, if Frank promises not to come forward until he can marry, you will be satisfied?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” said Bobby, sulkily.

“You will promise this?” said Lord Wastwater to Frank.

Frank assented, and after a little more talk and persuasion Bobby took his leave, still very angry, but not daring to show his annoyance.

As soon as he was gone Frank said, with a short laugh, “The absurd part of it all is that she has refused me.”

“Refused you!” exclaimed Lord Wastwater. “Why on earth didn’t you say so?”

“Because she wrote to me to tell me to say nothing, and because I couldn’t bear thinking that Bobby would laugh at me, and because I haven’t quite given up hope. Oh, hang it all! I daresay I’d better have said so,” and he threw himself into a chair, put his arms on the table and buried his face in them. Lord Wastwater looked curiously at him.

“What happened?” he asked.

“Well, I saw her yesterday and asked her, and she said ‘No.’ That’s all.”

“What else did she say?”

“Oh, nothing else,” said Frank, quietly. “There isn’t any one she cares about, she says, only she doesn’t care for me. But she wants to be friends still.”

Lord Wastwater shrugged his shoulders.

“Yes, but I want to be friends too,” said Frank, noticing the gesture. “It’s better than nothing.”

“Oh, if you’re satisfied it’s all right. Do you think she was surprised?” said Lord Wastwater.

“Yes, I think she was. Of course, as I couldn’t marry we were more like friends. Oh, well, it’s no use talking, and I may succeed yet.”

“If she was taken by surprise, perhaps she may change her mind,” said Lord Wastwater.

“Yes, perhaps,” answered Frank.

There was a moment’s silence, then Frank went on, “I had a bad time of it altogether yesterday, for I went to see Goldstein late in the evening.”

“Goldstein?” said Lord Wastwater, in a tone of surprise.

“Yes; I told you about the girl, you know.” Lord Wastwater nodded. “Well, he wrote and told me to come with her brother last night at eleven o’clock. And we went. But I did no good. He was very brutal, and I lost my temper. I was tired and worried, I suppose. I think I’d better not have gone.”

“So do I,” said Lord Wastwater. “I can’t imagine why you went. However, I daresay you didn’t do much harm.

Now, look here, Frank, can you go to the City for me? You may just as well do something—it will change your thoughts."

Frank agreed willingly, and Lord Wastwater gave him a paper of instructions which he carefully explained, adding at the end, "You will be back in lots of time to go to the Silchester House garden-party, if you want to go."

"Oh, I don't care," returned Frank. "I don't want to see anybody. No, I shan't go."

He left the room, and Lord Wastwater slowly returned to Payne. "I wonder if she will change her mind," he thought. "I think not,—Patience isn't that sort of woman. I am surprised, but I don't know why I should be. Perhaps she

ought to have been warned, only it would have been no use. People must be allowed to burn their own fingers,—the misfortune is that they so often burn the other person's as well. Well, it's an old story. It's better to live in the Pacific Islands. No one knows anything about friendship there."

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE GARDEN-PARTY.

THE garden - party at Silchester House was one of the smartest of the season. Two years before, Silchester House had been sold by Lord Sapworth to a Mr Podson, a Manchester man, and he and his wife had since been successfully accomplishing the process known as “getting into society.” By this time, in fact, they might be said to have arrived in its very heart. They were besieged with requests for invitations.

They basked in the smiles of royalty, and were content.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and the lawn in front of the house was crowded with gay, well-dressed people, as Lord Wastwater came up. He had determined, if possible, to have a conversation with Patience about Frank, and to find out how much hope there really was for him. So he threaded the various groups looking for her, but for some time in vain. At last he was addressed by a smart-looking young woman who was standing talking to one or two men. He approached in response to her call.

“Oh, Lord Wastwater,” she said, “are you disengaged for Sunday the 20th of

June? and will you come and stay with us at Ashcroft?"

"I think I am free," he answered. "I should much like to come."

"And we want Mr Murchison, too. I shall send a reminder." And she waved her hand gaily as Lord Wastwater bowed and passed on to Patience, whom he had just caught sight of. He spoke a few words to her, and then they walked off together in the direction of the garden.

"Is that going to be a marriage, Mrs Golightly?" said a young man called Charlie Dunbar, who was standing close by.

"I wonder," said Mrs Golightly. "I should be sorry to marry him; he terrifies me—makes me creep."

“Then why do you ask him to stay with you?” asked Dunbar.

“Oh, I must; he is quite the right man to have. Besides, that’s not marrying him.”

They all laughed.

“I hear he has lots of money, and three country-houses,” said a tall, dark, foreign-looking man.

“Still, Count Hohenstein, one must think a little of the man when one marries,” said Mrs Golightly.

“You’d have to think a great deal about Wastwater if you married him,” said Hohenstein.

“And that’s just what Mrs Golightly objects to,” said Dunbar. “When’s Tommy coming back?”

Tommy was Mr Golightly.

“Oh, next week, in time for my party on the 20th. He has been in America.”

“Has he had a good time?” asked Dunbar.

“Yes, he’s very happy; he’s just been mesmerising some young alligators.”

“Dear me! Isn’t it dangerous?” said Dunbar.

“Oh no, he says it’s perfectly safe,” returned Mrs Golightly.

“The worst of mesmerism,” said Count Hohenstein, “is that the person you have mesmerised sometimes follows you about.”

“Then the alligators may be expected at Ashcroft about the 20th?” said Dunbar.

“You will have to hand them over to Lord Wastwater,” said Hohenstein. “He

will be sure to understand them ; he likes strange things."

" Oh, he ! he's a snake himself, I believe," said Mrs Golightly, with a shiver. " Don't let us talk of him--he makes me uncomfortable."

Meanwhile the subject of their conversation and Patience had wandered off together to a bench which was concealed from observation by a thicket of flowering shrubs. They talked for some time of indifferent things, although throughout the conversation each felt that a more intimate talk must follow. At last a silence fell on both, and after a while Patience moved nervously, and looked up at Lord Wastwater. His face had a stern set expression, and he was looking straight

before him, but her movement roused him, and he turned to her with a quick bright smile. It lighted up his face wonderfully, this smile, when it did come, but it was of very rare occurrence. Patience was the person who saw it oftenest. It now gave her courage, and she began—

“Lord Wastwater, I want to—to ask your advice, if you don’t mind.”

“I should like it. You know I am always glad if I can help you at all.”

His tone was gentle, and she looked at him gratefully. Then she said, “Has Mr Murchison said anything to you about yesterday?”

“Yes, he has; he has told me everything, I think. Wouldn’t it be better,

Patience, if you told your brother you had refused him?"

"I can't bear Bobby to know it. He will go and tell every one, and I want no one to know it. Surely we can go on being friends as before?"

Lord Wastwater smiled. "Frank wants to try. That's just what I want to ask you about."

"Ought I to give up seeing him altogether, do you think?" she asked.

"Do you like him very much as a friend?"

"I feel I can trust him entirely; yes, I like him very much. But I don't want him to be unhappy."

"Why don't you marry him?" he asked, quickly.

“Because I can’t,” she said, in a low voice.

“Don’t you think that in time you may change your mind?” he said.

She shook her head, “Never.”

“You are not sorry you refused him?”

“Oh no.”

“Poor Frank!” said Lord Wastwater, with a half sigh.

“But we can be friends,” she said, eagerly. “I’m sure there would be no harm in that. My aunt is so funny; she seems to think if one refuses a man, one ought never to see him again. One can’t marry every one one wants to be friends with.”

“It is an old-fashioned idea, and no doubt a mistaken one,” said Lord Wast-

water. "And I believe Frank will be happier to see you on those terms than not at all, so I don't see why you shouldn't go on. But I'm very sorry you won't marry him."

"I almost wish I could do it to please you," she said, laughing.

"A bad reason for marriage," he replied.

She picked a piece of lilac which was close to her, and began to pull it to pieces.

"I don't suppose I shall ever marry," she said.

"And why not?"

"I shall never like any one well enough. Don't laugh at me: yesterday I thought of all the men I knew, and I couldn't conceive marrying any one of them."

"How very uncomplimentary to us," said Lord Wastwater.

Somehow his remark seemed to silence her, and produce a sense of restraint. After a moment she rose and said, "It is time to go back to my aunt, I think; I shall be late."

He followed her, and as they walked on he said, "Then St Buryans is one of the impossibilities?"

"St Buryans!" Her tone was one of unfeigned surprise.

"Surely you know that it is the earnest wish of the two families that you should marry him?"

"Ridiculous. St Buryans!" And she laughed in genuine amusement.

"Don't laugh like that. Now, Patience,

I make a prophecy. St Buryans will propose to you in the course of a week," said Lord Wastwater.

She threw back her head. "Very well, let him," she said. "It won't much matter."

"Why, here is the youth himself," said Lord Wastwater. "I'm sure he's looking for you. Now, I shall leave you. St Buryans," he called out, "will you take Miss De Lisle to Mrs Dearing? I want to speak to some one here for a moment."

St Buryans came up with alacrity, and Lord Wastwater, quite disregarding Patience's look of anger, disappeared down a side-walk.

St Buryans had been looking for

Patience for some time. He was determined to press matters forward to-day, for a talk with his mother had convinced him that he must exert himself. He was mildly in love with Patience, he knew she would have money, and thought she was a nice girl, and all that, as he expressed it. He was harmless and empty-headed, but as yet without that knowledge of the world which comes sooner or later even to the most incapable member of the upper ten thousand, and he was quite unconscious of Patience's superiority. He thought she would certainly accept him, and they would marry, and get on very well together, he going his way and she hers. So, quite prepared for conquest, he moved

to her side and began, “Is it true that you are not going to Mrs Cole’s ball to-night?”

“Quite true. We are going to the opera.”

“But why not to both?”

“I don’t care for the ball, and I am rather tired.”

“Then I shan’t go either,” he said.

She tried to turn the conversation.

“You’d much better go and dance with Miss Blake. I know that great American lady is a friend of yours. I met her the other day. How nice she is.”

It was no use, he would not be put off. “Surely you don’t think I care about Miss Blake,” he said in a meaning voice, and he tried to press her hand.

She drew it hastily away. St Buryans

bored her at all times, but in his present mood he was positively hateful, and now she had managed to make him think she was jealous of Miss Blake. She said in an irritated voice, "What can it matter to me whether you care for Miss Blake or not?"

"It matters a good deal to me whether you are angry. Surely you know I would rather spend ten minutes with you than a whole day with her."

"Would you rather spend a whole day with me than ten minutes with her? That would be the best test."

St Buryans was not quick, and he could not understand this, so he said, "I don't care about tests—I want to spend a great many days with you. Patience, I

want you to marry me.” And again he took her hand.

It was too much for Patience ; her nerves were somehow strangely sensitive to-day, and St Buryans had contrived to exasperate her completely. She sprang from him. “St Buryans, don’t be a goose,” she said ; “don’t ever talk like this again. I won’t have it, do you see ?” and she almost stamped her foot.

St Buryans looked thoroughly bewildered. “But you don’t understand, Patience. I’m asking you to marry me.”

“Yes, and I refuse, do you see ? I refuse.”

“You won’t marry me ?”

“No, no, no.”

“Oh, very well,” said the youth, in an

offended tone; “then I’ve been mistaken, that’s all.”

Patience was too angry to speak, and St Buryans walked on in sullen silence till they reached the lawn, where was Mrs Dearing waiting and looking out for her.

“Patience, we ought to be going,” she said as they came up. Then she looked at the two for a moment. “Yes, we ought to be going,—come along. St Buryans, will you look for the carriage? What is the matter with you?” she asked, as soon as he was gone. “Have you had an explanation, or what?”

“I’ll tell you in the carriage, Aunt Almira,” said Patience. “I can’t here.”

“Very well, dear, then come along.

St Buryans will find the carriage directly. But what can be the matter?" she added, as they came up to a little group of people; "every one looks frightened to death. Has anything happened?"

Evidently something had happened. Several people were standing in a group listening with an expression of horror in their faces, while Bobby De Lisle was telling them some story. Mrs Dearing pressed up to the group, asking loudly what was the matter, and at once two or three people answered, "Haven't you heard? It's terrible! The most ghastly murder."

"Murder?" said Mrs Dearing; "who has been murdered?"

"Mr Goldstein," said one of the group.

“What! Jasper Goldstein the banker?”  
asked Mrs Dearing.

“Yes, murdered: found this morning in  
his study, stabbed.”

“Good heavens! how horrible,” said Mrs  
Dearing. “But how did it happen? Who  
brought the news?”

“I did,” said Bobby. “I went to  
his house at five, to try and see him,  
and this was what I heard. The ser-  
vants told me all about it. They wanted  
me to go in, but I couldn’t,” and he  
shuddered.

“You’re looking quite ill, Bobby—you’d  
better come home with us,” said Mrs  
Dearing.

“No, I shall be all right soon. I went  
to the club, and couldn’t find any one I

knew, so I came here. I couldn't stand being alone."

"But you were dining with him last night!" said Mrs Dearing.

"Yes, that's what makes it so horrible," said Bobby.

"Dining with him, were you?" said Dunbar. "Was it a large party?"

"No, only he and I. I left him a little after eleven, when two other men came to see him."

Whether by Bobby's look, or for some other reason, Patience was suddenly reminded that Frank had said that he had an appointment late the night before. And she asked in a low voice, "Who were the men?"

Bobby hesitated. "One I didn't know; the other was—well—Murchison."

Some one in the group said, "Murchison! that's the heir, isn't he?"

Patience got rather white. "Has he heard of the murder?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Bobby. "Here is Lord Wastwater, ask him. You have heard the news, I suppose?" he said to him.

"Of Goldstein's murder?"

"Yes."

"I have just heard it," said Lord Wastwater, gravely, "but I know no particulars. Do you?"

"Only that I have just been to the house, and the servants told me about it."

"The inquest is to-morrow, I suppose?"

"They said so."

"Just come and tell me about it, Bobby," said Lord Wastwater. "Hadn't you better

take Miss De Lisle home ?" he said to Mrs Dearing. "She looks rather white ; this has been too much for her."

"No," said Patience ; "I want to hear more about this."

Lord Wastwater looked at her for a moment. "You are very much upset by this," he said, gently. "I think you had better go home. Either Bobby or I will come in later and tell you what there is to tell, or we will write."

"There is really nothing more to tell at present," said Bobby.

She still hesitated. At this moment St Buryans came up. "The carriage is there," he said ; "but what is this awful news of Goldstein being murdered ? Have you heard of it ?"

Mrs Dearing pointed to Bobby. "He

can tell you—he has just come from the house," she said. "Now, Patience, you must come. You have heard Bobby say there is nothing more to know at present."

Patience obeyed in silence, and they went off and got into the carriage. They were a little way from home, and for some minutes they drove in silence. At last Patience said, "Don't let's go to the opera to-night, Aunt Almira."

"My dear, we'll certainly stay at home if you like, but don't you think it would distract you?"

"Oh no, I couldn't bear it; besides, if they come I want to see them."

"What, Bobby?"

"Yes, or Lord Wastwater. I want to know about this horrible thing."

"Don't think about it too much," said

Mrs Dearing ; “it will only get on your nerves. And it can’t affect you in the least, you see.”

“Only every one seems to have gone to see him last night,—Bobby and Mr Murchison. I can’t think of anything else.”

“It must have been one of the servants, I should think,” said Mrs Dearing. “I daresay they robbed him afterwards. Well, we shall know all about it. But, Patience, you look quite white. I wish you hadn’t heard this horrible news so suddenly.”

“Oh, I shall be all right, Aunt Almira,” Patience said, with a half sob, “only it was rather a shock : this was the very day he wanted us to go to his party, you know. And then, I’ve had such a worrying afternoon. St Buryans——”

“Yes, what about him?” asked Mrs Dearing, who was full of anxiety to hear what had passed, and also glad to get Patience off the topic of the murder.

“Oh, he asked me to marry him.”

“Well, there’s nothing very dreadful in that, dear. And what did you say?”

“Oh, I refused him, of course,” she returned.

Mrs Dearing gave a sort of grunt. “So you won’t marry him?”

“Marry him! Aunt Almira, how could I? And I don’t want to marry any one; only, why is everything going so wrong?” and she burst into tears.

Mrs Dearing soothed her very tenderly.

“Don’t be unhappy, dear, there’s nothing to fret about.” Then she added in a lower

tone, “You’re not worried about Frank Murchison, are you ?”

“Oh no, it’s not Frank,” answered the girl, with a half smile,—“at least, not because I want to marry him. He did ask me yesterday, and I refused him.” Mrs Dearing gave a slight start. “Yes, I didn’t tell you—I didn’t want Bobby to know. It isn’t that ; oh, I don’t know what it is.”

There was a look of understanding on Mrs Dearing’s face as she comforted her niece. “All this means that the girl’s in love with somebody,” she said to herself, “and if it’s not Murchison, who is it ?” But the carriage now drove up to the house, and there was no answer to the question.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE INQUEST.

AMONG the occupations which Lord Wastwater had for a time pursued with zest was that of an amateur detective. Both in Paris and New York he had known the leading men in the detective police, and more than once his quickness and his acute insight had solved what appeared to be an inexplicable enigma. When he came to England a former Parisian friend had introduced him to Roke, one of the chief detective inspectors in London :

the detection of crime and the pursuit of a criminal still gave him some interest, and Roke, having found the value of his insight, would sometimes seek his help. It was therefore not surprising that, amongst the crowd of well-known people who filled Mr Goldstein's house on the morning of the inquest, one of the foremost figures was that of Lord Wastwater. For Mr Goldstein's murder had created an immense sensation in London. He was a rich man, and although not popular, was very well known in society. Then the murder had been committed in a particularly cold-blooded way, and as yet nothing was known as to the identity of the murderer. Mr Goldstein's house was in Preston Square. It was a gloomy-looking mansion,

standing a little way back from the pavement at the corner of the Square, and it had a small garden at the back in which was a gate opening on to John Street. On the morning of the inquest a large crowd was gathered round the house outside, while inside the rooms were filled with people and police. On the right of the entrance-hall were two rooms—a library, and Mr Goldstein's study. The latter opened on to the garden, and it was here that the body had been found.

The coroner was sitting in the dining-room, a large gloomy room on the left of the hall, and he had already taken the evidence of the servants and the doctor. The following facts had been elicited.

At eight o'clock on Tuesday morning,

June the first, the housemaid, on going into the study as usual, was surprised to find the window into the garden wide open. On looking about, she observed that Mr Goldstein was sitting before his writing-table with his head resting on his arms as if he were asleep. Terrified at what she saw, she called the footman, and together they went up to their master. They found him quite dead: a knife was thrust into the back of his neck, and the weapon was still in the wound. Mr Goldstein's writing-table stood at the end of the room, and he always sat with his back to the French window, which opened on to the garden. The window, as we have said, was open. The footman stated that Mr De Lisle had dined there the evening

before, alone with Mr Goldstein, and they had played cards. On going into the room about 9.30 he had noticed a pile of bank-notes in front of De Lisle, and later he had come in with the candles and had been told by his master to take what he supposed to be the same notes off a small table near the fire, and to give them to him. He had noticed that there was nothing else on this table. In the morning the notes had disappeared, but on the small table was a half-smoked cigar, and some cigar-ashes. It was well known that Mr Goldstein never smoked. The piece of evidence, however, which produced most sensation was that on going to the door with the candles a little before 11.30 he had heard loud and angry

voices in the room. He listened, and heard some one say, "Jasper, I could kill you for your behaviour in this matter;" and then he heard Mr Goldstein answer in a quiet voice, "I daresay my death would not come amiss to a penniless fellow like you." Hearing this, he had thought it best not to interrupt, and on going into the room a few minutes later he had found no one there. But he swore that the voice in which the threat was uttered was that of Frank Murchison, Mr Goldstein's cousin. The doctor proved that Mr Goldstein was quite dead when he was called in to see him about 8.30 on the morning of the 1st, and that death had taken place about eight or nine hours before.

While this evidence was being taken, a short dark man, with a fat smooth face, stood near the door listening attentively. At the end of the footman's statement he moved forward, and was presently addressed by a stout elderly person, who had the unmistakable air of a butler. His naturally ruddy face was pale, and his eyes had a startled look, as if he expected to see some terrible sight. In spite of his natural agitation, he thought it necessary to make a parade of grief, and as he stood listening to the evidence, he pressed ostentatiously to his eyes a large black-bordered pocket-handkerchief. But as the other drew near he put the handkerchief back into his pocket and began, "Ah, Mr Roke, this is a terrible time!"

My nerves are gone since yesterday morning. Why, I'm all of a shiver."

"No wonder," said Roke, with ready sympathy. "It is a horrible murder."

"Horrible, indeed, sir, horrible, and very mysterious so far. But something will come out soon." And he looked important.

"Ah," said Roke, with an interested air. "And who is this who is going to be examined now?"

"Why, Mr De Lisle, of course."

"And who is that standing near him?"

"That's young Mr Murchison, him as is secretary or something to Lord Wastwater, and my poor master's cousin. Come closer, sir," he added in a whisper, "come closer. It's him as did it!"

Roke looked surprised. "Mr Murchison?" he said.

"Ah, you'll see if I'm not right," said the butler, sagely. "But we must listen."

Roke nodded. "I shall see you afterwards," he said; and moving a little nearer, he gave his whole attention to the evidence.

De Lisle began by admitting that he had dined with Mr Goldstein the evening of the murder, and stated that he left him at his own request at five minutes before eleven.

"How do you know the exact hour?" asked the coroner.

"He told me when I came that I was to go early, as he expected some one on business. At a quarter to eleven he looked

at the clock, and said I had better go. I got my coat, and as I left the house I noticed that it was five minutes to eleven."

"Did he say what the business was?"

"Yes; he said, 'It's that bothering cousin of mine, Frank Murchison. He wants to see what he calls justice done to somebody. I told him and his friend to come late to-night, so that the servants shouldn't know of it.'"

"How did you leave the house?"

"By the study - window and the garden."

"Was that a common way for people to leave?"

"In the evening, not uncommon," answered De Lisle.

“Was the door from the garden into the street open?”

“Yes; Goldstein told me I should find it open. I believe it was not always so.”

“What did you do during the evening, Mr De Lisle?”

“We played *écarté* as usual.”

“Did you lose or win?”

“Lost, also as usual.”

“Were the bank-notes which the servant observed yours?”

“They were mine at first, later they became Goldstein’s.”

“Have you seen those notes since?”

“Yes; they were returned to me the next morning by post, in an envelope.”

“With any memorandum?”

“Absolutely none. I have the envelope,” and he handed it to the coroner.

It was an ordinary white envelope—the address in printed letters, the post-mark that of the district in which Mr Goldstein’s house was situated.

“Have you no idea how these notes came to you?”

“None whatever,” said De Lisle. He added with a half laugh, “Goldstein wouldn’t be likely to have sent them.”

“Now, Mr De Lisle,” said the coroner, gravely, for Bobby’s manner impressed him unfavourably, “will you tell me where you went after leaving Mr Goldstein?”

“Home to my lodgings in Mount Street,” was the reply.

“Did any one let you in?”

“No, I have a latch-key.”

“Did any one see you?”

“I believe no one.”

“And at what hour did you reach home?”

“At about a quarter past eleven. I walked.”

“Did you go out again?”

“No, I went to bed, rather unusually early, but £300 is enough in one evening.”

“£300 was the sum you lost?”

“Yes, exactly that.”

“How did you happen to go to Mr Goldstein with so large a sum in your pocket?”

“Because he was so suspicious, he wouldn’t

play with me unless I brought the money, so I raised it in the afternoon somehow."

"Did you and Mr Goldstein exchange any angry words while you were together?"

"No, we were most amiable. He always was when he was winning."

"Yes, but you?"

"Oh, I take life as it comes," said De Lisle.

"Had you lost much to him before?"

"A fair amount."

"Did you notice anything odd in his manner? Did he seem nervous?"

"He was just as usual."

"Did you smoke while you were with him?"

"No, I don't smoke."

"Did you meet any one as you were leaving the house?"

“Yes; in the street, close to the garden-gate, I met Frank Murchison, and another man with him whom I didn’t know.”

“Did you speak to them?”

“Yes; I said to Murchison that I’d lost a lot of money, and I hoped he’d have better luck with his business than I had with mine.”

“Was that all that passed?”

“He said that he hoped so too, and they went on into the garden.”

“Have you ever seen this knife before?”

Bobby took the knife and looked at it carefully. It was very peculiar. The blade was long, thin, and sharp; the handle was long also, and was of silver, with carved work all over it. The weap-

on was capable of being used with deadly effect. On each side of the handle were two little silver plates, looking as if something had been taken off and the holes closed up. Presently Bobby gave the knife back again, saying that he had never seen it before, and after a few more questions his examination ended.

The next witness was Frank Murchison. After the usual preliminary questions, he stated that he had visited Mr Goldstein on the night of the murder, in company with another man, James Kennett by name, on a matter of business. He had come a minute or two before eleven, and had noticed the hour on entering Mr Goldstein's room. He remembered having seen Bobby come out of the garden-gate

as they entered, and recollected the words Bobby had said and his answer.

“Of what nature was this business?” asked the coroner.

“I had rather not say,” replied Murchison.

“Did you or did Mr Kennett conduct the conversation?”

“I did.”

“Then I must ask you to give me its purport,” said the coroner.

Murchison looked annoyed, but had to obey.

“Mr Kennett is a tenant farmer on Mr Goldstein’s Wessex estate. Some time ago he asked me to help him in appealing to Mr Goldstein for justice. About two years ago Mr Goldstein made acquaint-

ance with Mr Kennett's sister, and paid her a good deal of attention. Kennett objected to this, and persuaded his sister to take a place as nursery governess at Scarborough. Thither Mr Goldstein followed her, and after some time she consented to marry him. Goldstein said that the ceremony must be performed in secret, for which he gave what Miss Kennett thought sufficient reasons. A form of marriage which she thought valid was gone through, and they went together to the Lakes. After a few months, however, he left her, and she was told that the marriage was a mere sham. He gave her £20, and since then has refused to help her or the child, or to see Kennett. On my remonstrating

with him at Kennett's request, he told me he would see us both on Tuesday night at eleven. And we came."

"And what was the result of your interview?"

"None whatever."

"That is to say, he refused any help?"

"Yes, absolutely."

"Did he admit that the marriage was invalid?"

"Oh yes, and he insinuated that Miss Kennett knew it, which was false."

Murchison's look and manner showed so plainly his indignation, that the next question surprised no one.

"Did you have an angry interview with Mr Goldstein?"

"Yes."

“Did you say, ‘Jasper, I could kill you for your behaviour in this matter?’?”

“I’m afraid I did. I was very angry.”

“Did he answer, ‘I daresay my death would not come amiss to a penniless fellow like you?’?”

“Yes,” replied Murchison again, but in a lower voice.

“What happened after that?”

“I said I thought we had better go, and he agreed, and we left the house.”

“How did you go?”

“By the garden window, as we came.”

“Did you see any one as you left?”

“We noticed a woman sitting on a door-step opposite the gate.”

“Did you speak to her?”

“No. Kennett said as we passed, ‘There,

that is what he would let my sister come to.”

“What did you do when you left the house?”

“We walked together to Kennett’s hotel, and then I went home.”

“What time did you leave this house?”

“About twenty minutes past eleven.”

“What time did you get home?”

“About a quarter to twelve.”

“Did any one see you come in?”

“No one,—I have a key.”

“You are Mr Goldstein’s cousin?”

“Yes, I am.”

“And you are his heir?”

“Heir to part of his fortune.”

“Were you on good terms with Mr Goldstein?”

“Yes, on the whole.”

“Did you notice any bank-notes when you were in the room?”

“Yes, there were some lying on a small table near the fire.”

“Did Mr Goldstein say anything about them?”

“No, nothing.”

“Did you smoke while you were in the room?”

“No.”

“Do you smoke?”

“Oh yes, but I did not then.”

“Have you seen this knife?”

Murchison took the knife carelessly in his hand and examined it. Suddenly he started, and seemed to be trying to recall something to his memory. After a moment he looked up.

"I believe I have," he answered, slowly.

"Where and when?"

"About two years ago, at Mr Goldstein's place, Clyfield. I saw it lying there one day in his room, and looked at it. He said it was a dangerous weapon, or something of that sort, I forgot the exact words."

"Is that the only time you have seen it?"

Murchison considered again. "Yes, the only time," he said, decidedly.

Murchison was then told that his examination was over, and he came back and stood by Lord Wastwater. He was looking rather white and grave, and Roke turned and examined him curiously and with some attention. Kennett's evidence, which was taken next, confirmed Mur-

chison's in every detail. He stated further that Murchison and he had parted about half-past eleven ; that he had gone in to his hotel, written a few lines to his sister, and had gone out again to post them. He had left the hotel about a quarter to twelve, and as it was fine and warm had walked about for a little, and had come home about a quarter past twelve. This was corroborated by the hotel porter. The hotel was between five and ten minutes walk from Preston Square.

The inquest was now adjourned to enable the police to procure further information, and a buzz of conversation at once began. Roke turned to Lord Wastwater and said—

“ Well, my lord, this is a mystery in your line.”

Lord Wastwater nodded. "Do you think we have heard of the murderer yet?" he asked.

"Well, I can't say, I'm sure," rejoined Roke. "But I should like to talk to your lordship about it. Can I see you at any time?"

"Certainly; come when you like."

"To-day, at six o'clock?" asked Roke.

"Yes, I shall be at home," returned Lord Wastwater.

"Very well, my lord, I will be with you." And so saying he went off in search of the butler, whom he found in the hall watching the jury leave the house.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ROKE AT WORK.

ROKE's acquaintance with the butler, Smithson, dated from two years back, when he had been called in by Mr Goldstein to trace some stolen money. He was a clever detective, and on that occasion had succeeded in bringing the theft home to one of the servants who was not in the least suspected. Smithson looked upon him with a certain awe, as possessing hidden powers of which he knew nothing, and always treated him

with great respect. The two men went through the curious crowd of people, who were all talking of the evidence, and passed the frightened servants, who, with white faces, were all huddling together in the passage as if they expected another murder to be committed, and then descended together to the housekeeper's room, where they found tea laid out, and the housekeeper, a portly lady of over fifty, with corkscrew curls on each side of her face, waiting for them. Signs of agitation were visible on her face also. Her cap was crooked and the curls awry, and she started at each noise. She shook hands warmly with Roke, sighing deeply as she did so. "Oh, Mr Roke," she said, "are you coming to help us again, and

to find out who it is who has committed this fearful crime ? ”

“ I don’t know yet, Mrs Merrimade,” he returned, “ but I have come to have a talk about it with you and Mr Smithson.”

The housekeeper looked pleased. “ Sit down, Mr Roke, and take some tea, and we will tell you all we know. I’ve my suspicions, of course—but there, one never knows.”

“ So have I,” said Smithson. “ What did I tell you up - stairs ? ” he asked, turning to Roke ; “ isn’t young Murchison the man ? ”

“ Well, of course there are things against him,” returned Roke, cautiously.

“ Things against him, indeed ! ” said the housekeeper, with an indignant sniff,—

“things against him ! I should just think there were.”

“Evidence enough to hang him, to my mind,” said Smithson.

“Oh, come,” said Roke, “it’s not so bad as that.”

“Why, look here,” said Smithson in an excited tone, hitching his chair up to the table, “there’s four things against him at least.” And he checked them off on his fingers. “First, he’s poor, and he’s the heir ; second, he was heard threatening Mr Goldstein ; third, he smokes ; fourth, he knew the knife.” And he looked triumphantly at Roke.

“That’s all very true,” said the latter, “especially about the knife. That’s an odd thing.”

“Ah,” said the butler, mysteriously, “we shall hear more about that knife, you may depend. I remember Mr Goldstein’s having it, well.”

“What? at Clyfield, I suppose,” said Roke quietly, holding his cup to Mrs Merrimade for some more tea.

“Yes, at Clyfield,” returned Smithson, “and here too, in this very house. It was lying on Mr Goldstein’s table upstairs—the very table where he was murdered,” and he sighed deeply, “and I asked him if I should clean it, and he said No. Yes, it was two years ago. Murchison was right there. And I remember what it was my poor master said to Murchison at Clyfield, though he says he don’t.”

The butler paused again, and Mrs Merrimade handed him some tea-cake in sympathetic silence. Roke said nothing, and presently he went on.

“He said, ‘That’s a formidable weapon, Frank, isn’t it?’ and Murchison he said, ‘Yes, one could kill a man easily with it.’ Those were his very words, and I don’t deceive you.”

Roke, who had been listening attentively, said, “Yes; and did you see it again?”

“It used to lie in the study at Clyfield till Mr Goldstein went to Scarborough,”—here he lowered his voice and looked at the housekeeper,—“went after Lily Kennett, you know; and he took it with him then. I never saw it afterwards. Tom

Allen went with him, but he got married soon after, and Mr Goldstein discharged him, and I never thought to ask him what became of the knife."

"Was Mr Goldstein popular down at Clyfield?" said Roke.

"No, not exactly," rejoined Smithson. "You see he was rather a hard man, and the tenants complained a good deal."

"Kennett is his tenant, isn't he?"

"Yes," answered Smithson. "Well, he had reason to be angry. Poor Lily Kennett! she was a pretty girl."

"Well, the men all thought so," said the housekeeper, tartly; "but that's no reason she should expect he was going to make her Mrs Goldstein over the head of every one. That's what I say."

"She did think so, I suppose," said Roke.

"She thought he was marrying her," answered Smithson, "that I do believe. They said she was half mad when she was told the truth. Kennett was awful angry too, he was. He threatened Mr Goldstein like anything, if it comes to that."

"I suppose he knew nothing at all?" said Roke.

"Knew nothing of the marriage," answered Smithson. "Lily told him she was going to another situation at the Lakes, and he thought it was all right, till three months after, she wrote to him and confessed the truth."

"Mr Goldstein seems to have got tired of her pretty soon," said Roke.

“Well, what could you expect?” said Smithson,—“a gentleman like him. Still, she was a pretty girl, yes, and a good girl too.”

“Well, pride goes before a fall,” said Mrs Merrimade, “and Lily Kennett was always above her station. Not but what I’m sorry for her and for the child.”

“Where is she now?” asked Roke.  
“In a situation somewhere, I believe. She has had to leave two already because they found out what had happened. And the child is at Mr Kennett’s farm. Have you had sufficient tea, Mr Roke? You have made a very poor meal,” said the house-keeper, graciously.

“Quite enough, thank you,” returned Roke. “Indeed I must be going. Could

I see the study again first, Mr. Smithson?"

"Oh, certainly," he returned with alacrity, and presently Roke was making a careful examination of the room and all it contained.

After spending a good deal of time in various investigations, he betook himself to Wastwater House. He was ushered into the library, and on hearing his name Lord Wastwater looked up quickly.

"Ah, Roke, I am glad you have come," he said. "Sit down. Are you in charge of the case?"

Roke answered in the affirmative.

"Well, and what is your opinion?" asked Lord Wastwater.

"I have come to know yours, my lord."

Lord Wastwater laughed. “What would people think if they heard that answer?”

“But they don’t hear,” rejoined Roke, coolly.

Lord Wastwater laughed again. “That’s just as well,” he said. “Roke, really you’re the only fellow I care to see,—you do say things which interest me sometimes. Well, what do you make of this mystery?”

Roke sat, quite unconcerned by this speech, bolt upright on the hard chair he had selected. He answered, “I make nothing of it yet—I know too little. But I have come for your lordship’s opinion on the little I do know.”

“Thinking it better than your own?”

“Not necessarily,” said Roke, without a smile. “But I don’t forget that on two

occasions you have been right, when I had gone off on a wrong track. And this case is a puzzle."

"What is the puzzle?" asked Lord Wastwater. "You don't suspect any of the three men who were examined to-day, I suppose?"

"The servants all suspect Mr Murchison," said Roke, with a swift look at Lord Wastwater.

"Oh, of course," returned the latter, calmly. "He's the heir, and he had a quarrel with Goldstein. Even the conviction of the real murderer won't make them believe in Murchison's innocence."

"I don't suspect Mr De Lisle," said Roke. Lord Wastwater was lying back in an arm-chair playing with a paper-cutter—a

favourite trick of his. He looked thoughtfully in front of him.

“No, it’s not De Lisle,” he said; “he’s not man enough.”

“And what’s to prevent it’s being Kennett?” asked Roke.

“Murchison tells me it’s not,” said Lord Wastwater.

Roke looked as if he did not think this conclusive. “He’d a strong motive for the murder,” he said.

“He had, no doubt; but if he is like what Murchison describes, he would not have taken this mode of revenge. Oh no,” went on Lord Wastwater, “people don’t kill their enemies nowadays,—they write to the evening papers.”

Roke took no notice of this speech, but

went on quietly, “Do you know what the papers were at which Mr Goldstein was looking when he was murdered, my lord?”

“No, not the least,” said Lord Wastwater.

“They were papers relating to a farm next to Kennett’s on the Clyfield property.”

“Well?” said Lord Wastwater.

“Now, my lord, may not this have happened? Kennett leaves the hotel at a quarter to twelve, goes straight back to Preston Square, finds the gate open and walks in. He apologises, and says he will be quite satisfied if he gets this farm. While Mr Goldstein is looking at the papers, Kennett stands behind him and stabs him.”

“It won’t do,” said Lord Wastwater, after an instant’s consideration.

“And why not?” said Roke.

“There are two objections,” said Lord Wastwater, briefly. “First, the notes were returned to De Lisle.”

“That we need hardly consider,” said Roke, with indifference. “A man who had brass enough to murder Mr Goldstein in the way I’ve described, might easily have sent back the notes. He had heard De Lisle say he had lost money. What is your other objection, my lord?”

“The cigar ashes,” said Lord Wastwater.

Roke made a low sound, and Lord Wastwater went on, “I knew Goldstein, and I am sure that he never would have allowed Kennett to smoke that cigar. You remem-

ber it was half smoked, and there was a lot of ash. It could not have just been laid down on the table. It was smoked in the room, and it was smoked by Mr Goldstein's murderer, but not by Kennett."

Roke rubbed his chin thoughtfully. After a minute he said abruptly, "It is a curious fact that Mr Goldstein had the knife with which he was killed with him at Clyfield Park two years ago."

"Yes, I remember Murchison said he saw it there," said Lord Wastwater.

"He took it with him to Scarborough when he went to see Lily Kennett, and it never came back." Lord Wastwater nodded.

"Thus we lose sight of the knife just when the connection with the Kennetts begins."

“ And you think—— ? ” said Lord Wastwater.

“ I think nothing—I merely mention the fact.”

Again there was silence, then Lord Wastwater said, “ What about that woman who was sitting on the door-step ? ”

“ I shall find her, I hope,” answered Roke, “ for she must have seen Mr Goldstein’s murderer.”

“ If she remained there,” said Lord Wastwater.

“ If she remained there,” returned Roke, slowly, “ and she need not have stayed there long. It is almost certain, I think, that the murder happened soon after Mr Murchison and Kennett left. Three men went to see Mr Goldstein that night before half-past eleven,

a fourth man came after that hour, and he was the murderer. I think she must have seen him."

"Well, then, your first task will be to find her, I presume," said Lord Wastwater.

"Yes," said Roke, briskly, getting up as he spoke. "Well, my lord, then I take it as your opinion that none of these three men are guilty, but that there is a fourth man in question?"

"That is what I believe," returned Lord Wastwater.

"And if I prove that Kennett took the knife from his sister two years ago and kept it——?"

"I shall still ask you to explain the cigar ashes," said Lord Wastwater.

Roke smiled, and departed without any

further talk, simply telling Lord Wastwater that he should let him know what he discovered. After he had gone Lord Wastwater got up and went to the window: it was wide open, and after a moment he stepped out on to the terrace and walked up and down for a while, thinking deeply. “Yes, it is a good case,” he said to himself, “and a difficult case: it would tax any one’s powers to find a clue. Well, we shall see.” He had reached the further end of the terrace, and, looking up, he saw Frank sitting on a seat close by. He went up to him and sat down by his side. It was a hot, oppressive evening, the sky was covered with heavy grey clouds, and there was a feeling of thunder in the air. Nothing was said for a moment. Frank was leaning for-

ward poking holes in the grass with his stick, and his attitude showed dejection and discouragement.

At last Lord Wastwater said—

“ Well, Frank, you’re a rich man now,—no more need to think of finding anything to do.”

“ Yes ; and half the people think I killed Goldstein,” said Frank, with a short laugh.

“ Well, never mind, they won’t think so long,—the murderer will be found.”

“ Do you think so ? ” said Frank, anxiously ; “ the thing seems so wrapped in mystery.”

“ Oh, I don’t know,” returned Lord Wastwater, in an indifferent voice.

“ Well, perhaps you will tell me who

did commit the murder," said Frank, with some irritation. "Three of us saw Goldstein that night. I didn't do it, and Kennett certainly didn't, and I don't suppose Bobby did."

"You're sure about Bobby, are you?" said Lord Wastwater.

"Fancy Bobby going and killing a man with the coolness and determination Goldstein's murderer must have had!" said Frank.

"Yes, I think he's too much of a cur," said Lord Wastwater.

Frank looked at him. "That's an odd expression to use," he said.

"I rather respect the man who killed Goldstein," observed Lord Wastwater. "He must have strength of mind as well as of hand."

“I wish I knew who he was,” said Frank, savagely.

“The fourth man? Yes. But the police will find him. At least, I suppose so. They generally try to find out who had a motive for the murder. That fails here. The difficulty seems to be to ascertain who had not a motive for killing Goldstein.”

“There may be something to be said for the murderer,” said Frank, slowly.

“There is everything to be said for him; nevertheless he’ll be hanged in the interests of society,” returned Lord Wastwater.

“And what do you think I’d better do now?” asked Frank.

“Why, go into mourning and spend

Goldstein's money, of course. What else can you do?"

"But about Patience?" said Frank.

"Oh, let her alone, man, and console yourself elsewhere. It's easily done."

Frank got up, looking rather angry. "Why do you say that?" he said. "What is the matter with you to-day? You are not the least like yourself."

"I don't know that," said Lord Wastwater, with a laugh. "Perhaps I am more like myself than usual. But if it comes to finding fault, why were you such an ass as to go and tell Goldstein that you wanted to kill him? No one would have thought about you if you'd held your tongue."

"Yes, I know, and I'm sorry."

“ What’s the use of that ? Well, just brazen it out now, and probably the fourth man will turn up, though I doubt very much whether Roke will find him.”

And with this he walked off into the house, leaving Frank plunged in gloomy meditation.

## CHAPTER IX.

## JENNY ALLEN'S EVIDENCE.

ROKE'S first act after leaving Wastwater House was to cross-examine the policeman who had been on duty in Preston Square on the night of the murder. The man told him that he had passed down John Street a little after eleven and had noticed no one, but that on coming back later he had seen a woman sitting on the doorstep of a house opposite Mr Goldstein's garden. He had told her to move on; she had replied that she was very tired,

and wanted to rest for a few minutes. He had gone on, and when he returned again she was no longer there.

Roke's task was now to try and trace her, and the next day he proceeded to inquire at all the cheap lodging-houses in the neighbourhood whether such a person had slept there on Tuesday night. For some time he was unsuccessful, but at last, after examining five or six loquacious landladies, who all talked irrelevantly about many lodgers, he came to a lodging-house kept by an old Irish-woman. She opened the door to him,— a strange old figure, dressed in a brown flannel gown, kilted up, and showing a torn old red petticoat underneath. In reply to his question, she said that a

woman answering to his description had come and asked for a lodging at a little after twelve o'clock on Tuesday night. The old woman seemed disposed to be communicative, and asked Roke to come in through a very dirty passage to a dark little back - room in which the dust of years seemed to have accumulated.

“Poor craytur,” she said, “she kem in that night, and she looked so sad, and the child was cryin’ so, it quite broke me heart. So I said, ‘Wait yet, and I’ll make ye comfortable, and give ye a bit to eat;’ and thin she tould me that a good gintleman had seen her sittin’ on a door-step, and had asked her what did she there. And when she tould him she was a counthry girl, and had no home

bekase her husband—bad luck to him!—had left her, he tould her to go back to the counthry, and gave her a sowereign to go with. And may the Lord be good to him!"

Roke thought for a minute.

"Just an ordinary passer-by," he asked, "was it, who helped her?"

"Indeed she said he kem out of a garden - door opposite, and kem right across the street to her."

Roke was not easily surprised, but this statement took him aback. "It can't have been the murderer," he thought; "no man who had just committed a murder would go and treat a woman with this kindness. If he'd done it going in, I could have understood it,—he would

want to get her out of the way. This must have been another man. I wonder how many more people went to see Goldstein that night?"

He continued his questions to the woman.

"She has left you, I suppose?" he said.

"'Deed and she has, sorr. She went off next mornin' to her place,—Pitton or Patton it was she called it, I think—I can't rightly tell; but she went by thrain, and she said it would take her two or three hours to get there."

"Was that the name of the station?"

"No, sorr: Matchford was the name of the station; Paddington was the station she went to from here. She went early in the mornin', so as to catch the tin o'clock thrain."

“ She didn’t tell you her name, I suppose ? ” asked Roke.

“ Sure, wasn’t it written down in the letter I had from her this mornin’ ? ”

“ May I see the letter ? ” asked Roke, as quietly as he could. He had been rather sceptical as to the old woman’s information so far—it came with suspicious readiness ; and he half thought that Patton and Matchford and the ten o’clock train might all prove to be a myth together. Unluckily the old woman now began to be cautious.

“ It’s no harrm ye’ll be maning her ? ” she asked, anxiously.

“ Certainly not,” said Roke, warmly. “ I am sent by the gentleman who gave her the money : he was in a hurry that

night and couldn't stop, but he wants to help her if her story is a true one."

The old woman looked hard at him, her bright eyes twinkling in her withered old Irish face ; but the detective's countenance wore an honest and straightforward look, and after a little hesitation she dived down into a capacious pocket and produced a crumpled paper. "There," she said, as she gave it him ; "ye look like an honest man, and I'll give ye the letter. And may the Lord be as good to ye as ye are to her!"

Roke took the letter. It was dated Patton, Matchford, and ran as follows :—

"DEAR FRIEND,—I should like to tell you that I got home safe, and I found my father and mother, and they have taken me

in. This is in return for your goodness to me; for you and the gentleman who gave me the money are the only people who have said a kind word to me for long. Again thanking you, dear friend—I am, your affectionate JENNY ALLEN."

Roke read the letter carefully and returned it.

"Thanks," he said; "I shall tell the gentleman, and he'll do something for her."

"I hope so, I hope so," said the old woman, wistfully. "I'd like the poor girl to be a bit looked afther."

Roke walked away in high spirits, although somewhat puzzled to account for all that he had heard. It was late, and nothing more could be done that day, so he went

home and prepared to start for Matchford the next morning. On his way down in the train he occupied himself in arranging his plan of action, and considering all the facts he had as yet discovered about the murder. It seemed clear that Jenny Allen must have spoken to a man who went to see Mr Goldstein after Murchison and Kennett had left him. The money had been given to her just about twelve, so that unless Mr Goldstein had received two more visitors that night, the man she had seen was the murderer. But then, how did he come to give her money? Roke puzzled over this for a long time, when suddenly a thought struck him. "Kennett," he thought, indeed he had almost said the name aloud,—“ Kennett, of course; it would

fit him. Didn't he say, 'There, that's what he would let my sister come to'? He might well be kind to her. It's an additional proof, that's what it is, and a strong one." At this moment the train drew up at the station to which he was bound, and Roke got out and inquired how far it was to Patton. "Three miles," was the answer, so he took his bag to the cloak-room and prepared to walk over.

The road led up over a hill, and then for a while along a level. It was hot and dusty, and the trim well-cut hedges on either side of the road gave no shade. Roke's London heart quailed as he plodded on, longing for a tramway or an omnibus, or even a pavement. At last he came to a place where a cool shady lane branched

off, and here stood a sign-post. But, after the fashion of country sign-posts, its directions were quite illegible. Turning away with a muttered exclamation of impatience, he caught sight of a woman walking along the lane a little way off. He ran after her, hailed her, and asked which of the two roads led to Patton.

“This one, sir,” she said; “it’s about a mile on.”

“That’s fortunate,” said Roke. “I couldn’t have walked much farther along that hot road. Is Patton a small place?”

“Quite small, sir,—only just the church and vicarage, and a few houses.”

“And you live there?”

“Yes, sir.”

Roke looked at the woman: she was

young, about twenty-five, poorly but cleanly dressed, and rather pretty. He noticed, too, that her accent differed a little from that of the people about. What if this were Jenny Allen herself? "Have you lived here always?" he asked.

She hesitated a little. "No, sir, I have lived in London; I have only just returned."

"I wonder if your name is Jenny Allen?" he said at a venture.

She started. "How do you know it, sir?" she asked.

"Because I am looking for you. You remember the gentleman who gave you money on Tuesday night?"

"Yes, sir," she said, with a startled air of surprise.

"He wants to help you if you want help."

“He is very kind, sir, but I am comfortable now. My parents have taken me in with my little boy. I shall have to go to service or get some work after a bit.”

Roke looked sympathising. “You have been very poor, I am afraid: that night when my friend found you, you were in great distress.”

“Yes, sir, indeed I was, and I don’t know what I should have done if it had not been for him. I was just beginning to despair.”

“Had you been sitting there long?”

“I suppose more than half an hour. The policeman told me to move on, but I begged him to let me stay and rest for a little, and he did. It was lucky for me,

for I shouldn't have met your friend. What is his name, sir?"

"Mowbray," returned Roke, coolly, and he hazarded another question. "Why didn't you ask Mr Mowbray to help you when he went into the house instead of when he came out?"

"I never asked him at all, sir—it was all his doing. I did think of asking when I saw him first, but before I could muster courage he had gone into the garden, and I was surprised to see him come out again about half an hour after. There were two gentlemen before, who came out of the same door, and one of them looked at me as he passed. But he gave me nothing, and I couldn't bear to ask."

"She has seen the murderer," said Roke

to himself. “This man who spent half an hour with Mr Goldstein at midnight is the fourth man we are looking for. It must be so.” He began again—

“You didn’t recognise Mr Mowbray, then? He was one of the gentlemen who passed you before—the one who looked at you, I expect. A tall man with a beard, you know.”

“It may have been so, sir: his coat-collar was turned up, and I didn’t see him very well. I heard his voice, but the other gentleman didn’t speak to me.”

“You thought the house belonged to Mr Mowbray, I suppose?”

“No, sir, I know,”—here she hesitated for a moment, but she went on,—"I happen to know it’s Mr Goldstein’s."

Another surprise. Roke thought for a moment.

"You were in service there, perhaps?" he said.

"No, sir; my husband was there for a time. He was Mr Goldstein's valet."

A sudden recollection came to Roke. This must be the Tom Allen Smithson spoke of, who had gone with Mr Goldstein to the Lakes.

Jenny went on with a sigh. "Mr Goldstein didn't want to part with him. He didn't want him to marry me. He was quite right,—he said Tom would get tired of me."

"Tired of you!" said Roke. "I hope he hasn't——?"

“Left me? Yes, sir, he has, about six months ago,” she said, sadly.

“And where is he?” asked Roke.

“He went back to Mr Goldstein’s for a month or two. I used to go to the Square sometimes to try and see him. I don’t think Mr Goldstein liked it, so he sent him away, and I don’t know where he is now.”

There was a moment’s pause, then Roke said—

“Did your husband like Mr Goldstein?”

“Yes, he did, sir. But I often think he did Tom a great deal of harm.”

“Blames Goldstein to shield her husband,” thought Roke; “very natural, poor thing! Suits me too. I know something of Mr Goldstein,” he went on,

"and it's not very creditable to him. Did you ever hear about Lily Kennett?"

The woman started. "Yes, sir, indeed I have. I'm afraid my husband had a hand in that, though he hardly had the heart to deceive the poor thing. He said it was very pitiful to see how entirely she trusted Mr Goldstein."

"The mock marriage must have been just before your husband left, I suppose?"

"About two months, sir; he left while Mr Goldstein was with her at the Lakes."

"They passed under another name, I suppose?"

"Yes, he called himself Gifford. He had a small house there."

"Did your husband know anything of James Kennett, the brother?"

“ He knew him a little, sir.”

“ You never saw him ?”

“ No, sir.”

“ He must have been very angry when he discovered the truth about his sister ?”

“ Well, sir, people said Mr Goldstein kept out of the way for fear of meeting him. He was afraid he might do him a mischief.”

“ I don’t wonder,” said Roke. “ Did you ever see Mr Goldstein ?”

“ Yes, sir ; he used to visit a good deal at Wilderby Hall—that’s Mr Dolben’s place, near here. People said he was going to marry Miss Dolben, but it never came off, and I think she was lucky.”

“ That was how you met your husband, I suppose ?”

"Yes, sir."

"And where did you live when you married?"

"We had a small shop in Islington, sir. We did pretty well for a bit, but then our trade failed, and I could not do much, and Tom was out a good deal, and so things got in a bad way, and then Tom went away." Her voice was trembling, and Roke was a soft-hearted man when crime was not in question. So he patted her shoulder and comforted her, and by the time it was over they reached the brow of a hill and saw Patton in the valley below them, close by. Just before the village was a pretty little house which Jenny pointed out as her father's, and here they parted, Roke

going off to the inn for some refreshment, and promising to look in upon Jenny again later.

As he sat eating bread and cheese he meditated on the results of the morning. He had ascertained that after Murchison and Kennett had left, a man had gone to Mr Goldstein's house, had remained there half an hour, had come out again, and had given Jenny Allen a pound. That this man might be either De Lisle or Kennett, inasmuch as he was tall and had a beard, "a description which does not apply to Murchison," thought Roke. If this man was Kennett, he was almost undoubtedly the murderer; if not, it was possible that he was only a visitor, and that the real murderer came later

still. Roke intended to visit Jenny again, so after strolling about for a little, looking at the village and the church, he bent his steps towards the cottage and knocked at the door. It was opened by Jenny herself, but Jenny looking very different from what she did in the morning. Her troubled face and the frightened look in her eyes showed that something was the matter; and a glance at the table, on which was an open newspaper, showed Roke at once what it was. "The local paper has come," he said to himself, "and with it the account of the murder. Now the fat's in the fire." He advanced, however, as if noticing nothing, and she let him come in. She watched him

go up to the table and take up the paper. He looked at it: it was the 'Loamshire Journal,' and on one sheet was exactly what he expected,—a glaring account of the murder, with headlines of the most sensational kind. Jenny gazed at him with eyes wide open with horror, and then said in a low voice, "Did you know that?"

Roke had had time to make up his mind.

"Yes," he said, coolly.

"You knew it when you were talking to me on the road?"

"Yes, I did."

"Talking all about Mr Goldstein and—Why, it was on Tuesday night that he was murdered, at twelve o'clock, just when I was there! That man who gave me the

money—the man you call your friend—who was he? and who are you?"

She was speaking rapidly in a low agitated voice.

"Don't be frightened," said Roke, soothingly, although in reality her agitation was rather welcome to him, as he hoped she might say something more.

"I'm not frightened," she said, "only I don't understand what it all means. This paper says that three men were there that night, and that Kennett was one. You were asking me about Kennett, —did I say anything? I saw nothing, heard nothing. Oh, what does it all mean?"

Roke thought the time for concealment was past.

"Well, my dear," he said, "I've deceived

you, and the truth must be told. It's about this murder I've come."

She shrank back. "Are you a policeman?"

"Well, a sort of policeman. You see we found out you had been sitting in the street, and had seen these men, so we wanted to know more."

"How did you find me?"

"Oh, that was easy, quite easy," said Roke, glad to convince her of the omniscience of the police. "Now the best thing you can do is to make a clean breast of it, and tell me anything more you know."

"I know nothing, nothing," she said. "I have told you all that happened. And it can't have been the man I saw.

How could he come and give me money, and speak kindly to me, when he had just committed a murder? Oh, it's horrible!" and she hid her face in her hands.

"Did he say much to you?" asked Roke.

"He said, 'Why don't you go home?' and I said I had none. He said, 'Have you no friends?' I said they were a long way off in the country, and he said, 'Then go back to them,' and put a sovereign in my hand and went away. That was all."

"Did you notice anything about his way of speaking?"

"Oh no, nothing particular."

Roke sat down and took up the paper. "Have you read this?" he asked.

She nodded.

“Now, who do you think murdered Mr Goldstein?”

“How can I tell?” she answered.

“Would you like to know who I think it was?”

She nodded again, keeping her eyes fixed on his face, and waiting anxiously for him to speak.

“Well, I think it was—Kennett.”

Her expression showed that it was the name she feared.

She said quickly, “And it’s because of what I’ve said that you think that? I tell you it wasn’t Kennett—I’m sure of it.”

“Why, you told me you’d never seen him, so how can you be sure?”

“Do you believe the man who gave me the money was the man who murdered Mr Goldstein?”

“That I don’t know.”

“It couldn’t have been,” she said, “it couldn’t have been—he was so kind.”

“Would you know him again?” asked Roke.

There was a second’s hesitation. Then she answered, “No, I should not.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” said Roke to himself as he looked at her, “but we shall see.”

“Well, my dear,” he said, kindly, “I’m sorry you have been so put about, but don’t you go and think about it now. And if you want any help, just write to that address,” and he put a card into her hand with a feigned name, under which letters were often sent to him.

She threw it on to the table. “I want none of your help,” she said. “You

have deceived me, you have treated me cruelly."

"I'm sorry," he said ; "we can't help ourselves, you know."

But she refused to look up, and he left the cottage, and, not dissatisfied with his day's work, made the best of his way back to Matchford, and so to London. As soon as he got home he wrote a note to Lord Wastwater. It was as follows :—

"My LORD,—I have found the woman. I have very little doubt she has seen the fourth man ; but she says she cannot identify him. So far as there is any fresh evidence, it points in the direction of which I spoke when I saw you last.—Yours faithfully,  
W. ROKE."

## CHAPTER X.

## ST BURYANS AGAIN.

SATURDAY, June 5th, the day of Roke's journey to Patton, was also the day fixed for Mr Goldstein's funeral. It had taken place at one of the London cemeteries, and afterwards the mourners had returned to the house in Preston Square to hear the will read. Many were the speculations as to how the dead man had left his money, —whether Murchison would inherit more than the sum entailed on him; if not, to whom the remainder would go. So far

as was known, Mr Goldstein had very few relations, and with those he had he was not on speaking terms. However, one or two very Jewish-looking cousins turned up, and there was also present Lord Marazion, who came in response to a summons from the lawyer, which he had received with some surprise. His surprise was destined to be increased, however; for after a few legacies, it was found that the bulk of the fortune, together with the house in Preston Square, was left to him.

Lord Marazion fairly gasped when he heard it, the cousins frowned, and the lawyer congratulated the fortunate heir. He told him that the inheritance, when all the deductions for Murchison and others were made, would amount to near half a

million, and he handed to him a letter, written by the testator, to be delivered after his death. It contained the simple announcement that he had left Lord Marazion all his money in consideration of the fact that he was his cousin, though a distant one.

Lord Marazion looked at the letter and at the lawyer, and at the letter again.

“This is a most complete surprise,” he murmured—“a most complete surprise.”

“It is a very pleasant one, Lord Marazion,” said the lawyer. “I am glad it has fallen to my lot to communicate it to you.”

Lord Marazion shook him warmly by the hand, and went home to tell Lady Marazion.

The news soon spread like wildfire, and many were the congratulations which flowed in. The person who rejoiced most, after the fortunate heirs, was Mrs Dearing, whose family pride was amply gratified by the new lustre which would now shine round the house of Treblazon.

Lady Marazion came to see her next day after church, and together they speculated comfortably on the future,—Lady Marazion's usual cold stiffness having for the moment quite disappeared in a glow of satisfaction and thankfulness. After the two ladies had talked for a time, Lady Marazion asked for Patience.

“She is not come in yet,” said Mrs Dearing, “but I expect her directly. She went back from church with her friend

Mrs Forrest, but she was not to stay for luncheon."

"Mrs Forrest is a nice woman, a very good friend for Patience," said Lady Marazion, approvingly.

"Yes; and now they live so near us, Patience can see a great deal of her. They have just moved into their new house."

"I hear Mr Forrest is making £2000 or £3000 a-year at the bar. He is one of the most rising men of the day."

"Yes; it's quite an exception to hear of a lawyer who is getting on, isn't it? Generally they never have a brief. And the marriage is such a happy one too."

"You speak as if that were an exception also, Almira."

“ Well, so it is, my dear—at least, among the people that I hear of. They all seem to want friends. People tell you, ‘ Oh, Mrs So-and-so is very unhappy with her husband, but young Such-a-one is such a good friend to her.’ In my day they ran away. However, I suppose it is better as it is.”

Just at this moment Patience entered the room, and overhearing part of the last remark, said with a smile, “ Aunt Almira, are you inveighing against the weaknesses of the present time. You know you said we were not so bad after all, the other day.”

Mrs Dearing laughed. “ When you begin to argue, Patience, you can prove anything,—you talk so much, you know.

Besides, I give it up; I can't understand what you all mean."

"Why, in what way?" said the girl. She was half leaning against the corner of the chimneypiece, one of her favourite attitudes, and she looked very graceful and attractive in her light, pretty, summer clothes. Mrs Dearing let her eyes dwell on her with pleasure as she replied, "Well, you all seem to want to do each other good; there's always talk about influencing people. What do you think, Jane? Did you ever do anybody good?"

"I hope I did my duty," said Lady Marazion, who disliked this sort of conversation.

"Yes; that's not the same thing," said Mrs Dearing. "My experience used to

be that when you tried to do people good, the men fell in love with you and the women got bored. It's astonishing how much depends on whether advice comes from a woman or a man."

"Aunt Almira, you're quite incorrigible," said Patience, coming up and kissing her. "I shall go and take off my things."

"Be quick, dear, because your aunt wants to see you before she goes, and she has not much time."

Patience's face fell as she heard this, for she never liked the conversations with Lady Marazion. However, she hurried as much as she could, and when she came down again she found that lady alone.

Lady Marazion had come to plead her

son's cause with Patience. With all her weakness for him, she was not blind, and she was quite conscious of the justice of Mrs Dearing's remarks about him. Besides, Lord Marazion had been anxious for some time as to his extravagance, and although that had now become of less importance, his mother felt that the knowledge of the family wealth might increase his lavishness, and would also infallibly bring numbers of bad advisers round him. She was therefore still more bent on the marriage than before, although for a different and worthier reason, and she was not inclined to take Patience's refusal very seriously. So she began as soon as the girl entered the room, "My dear, I want to talk to you about poor St Buryans."

“ Yes, Aunt Jane,” said Patience, sighing inwardly at the prospect.

“ He is very unhappy, you know.”

“ I am sorry,” returned Patience, gravely.

“ Can you give him no hope ? ”

“ I’m afraid not, Aunt Jane. I like him, of course, but I can’t marry him.”

“ Why not ? ” asked Lady Marazion.

“ I don’t care about him enough,” said Patience, gently.

“ You don’t dislike him, do you ? ”

“ No, it’s not that, but I don’t want to marry him.”

“ Look, Patience, St Buryans is very much attached to you,—he has been miserable since last Wednesday. What is it you want ? If you married him you would have a fine position, and a husband who

would be devoted to you. Is not that enough to satisfy you?"

"I can't marry a man I don't love," said the girl, in a low voice.

"Is there any one else you love?"

"No," she said, still lower.

"Then think well before you refuse," said Lady Marazion, "because you have a great opportunity." She got up and stood by Patience, and putting her hand on her shoulder said, "St Buryans wants a good wife, my dear. You could make a great deal of him. I should be very glad and very happy if you were to marry him. Think of it."

The girl was moved, more perhaps than she cared to show. She looked up at Lady Marazion with glistening eyes. "I will

think of it," she said ; " but you are wrong, Aunt Jane, I should not suit St Buryans. He—I cannot explain, but I don't think we should be happy."

Lady Marazion saw she had made an impression, and thought it was deeper than it was.

"St Buryans is coming this afternoon," she said ; " you will be kind to him, won't you ?" And stooping down, she kissed her forehead, and then hastily left the room.

Patience sat still for a while thinking, but she was soon interrupted by the arrival of some people for luncheon. They stayed some time, and were succeeded by other visitors, and so the time went on. Patience sat nervously expecting St Buryans, but he did not come. Nor did Lord Wastwater,

whom she also expected, and who generally came to Berkeley Square on Sundays when he was in London. At last, however, later in the afternoon, there was a ring at the bell, and presently Lord St Buryans was ushered in. Mrs Dearing, on seeing who it was, and that all the other visitors had gone, said in the most marked way that she was tired, and should go and lie down, and with that departed, while Patience prepared herself for the coming ordeal. She observed with some surprise that St Buryans had quite lost the confidence he had showed before: he stood looking nervous and anxious, and only answered at random the casual remarks she made. The fact was that her scornful refusal had done him a great deal of good.

He had come to her expecting that she would pick up gratefully the handkerchief he threw her, and had found an absolute indifference to himself and to all he had to offer. Now that he had much more to give, he was far more doubtful as to the result. Whether it was because the prize had become more tempting as it became more unattainable, or because he had been changed by the transforming touch of real love, it is certain that the feeling with which he approached Patience now was as different as possible from that with which he had proposed to her four days before. His mother had encouraged him, had told him it was all a mistake, that Patience had been hurried, that she did not mean what she said. In his heart he believed she did,

and his fears of failure were great ; yet he ardently desired to succeed, and felt all at once as if a new light had shone on him, making things appear strange and unnatural. Patience divined much of this by instinct, and she felt very pitiful towards him when he at last took courage and began.

“ Patience, I want you to tell me if you won’t change your mind about last Wednesday.”

She looked up inquiringly,—it was too indirect for her to seem to understand.

“ When I asked you, you know,—asked you if you would marry me.”

“ St Buryans——” she began.

“ No, don’t answer at once,” he said, eagerly, “ because I want to say a little more. You see, I was a fool that day :

somehow I didn't understand you, and I thought you'd say Yes. But I've been thinking since, and I know I'm not a bit really fit to be your husband, only you see I'd let you have anything you wanted, and do anything you wanted. And I believe you could really make something of me, Patience, if you'd only try." He paused and looked wistfully at her.

She was sitting in the corner of the sofa, and she looked at him as he spoke. He was standing close to her, for in his nervousness he had risen as soon as he began to speak about himself; and as she gazed at him, and saw his boyish look, his weak commonplace face, and his wistful expression, she felt a great pity for him. And then there came back to her memory Lady

Marazion's words, "If you married him you would have a fine position, and a husband who would be devoted to you. St Buryans wants a good wife. I should be very happy if you married him." Many and varied motives were swaying her, and for a moment she wavered.

He saw her hesitation, and it gave him courage. "Do be kind to me, Patience," he said. "Look here, think about it and let me know to-night. I'll wait till then: I'd wait a good deal longer if I thought you'd say Yes."

She lay back with her hands clasped, still looking at him. "I can't give you any hope," she said, slowly; "but I will think of it and write to you. Only I don't believe I shall alter, and I don't want you to think so."

"It's something that you don't say No at once," he said, "and I must be content. But, Patience," and he sat down by her side on the sofa, "do try and think kindly of me. I would seek for nothing but how to make you happy."

"I know," she said; "I believe you would."

"Then, why don't you marry me?" he went on. "My mother says there is no one else."

"No," she answered, slowly, "there is no one else."

"Are you sure?" he asked, struck by her tone.

"Yes, I am sure. But that will not make me marry you, St Buryans."

"No; but you can try and like me, and

that is a great deal. And I will make you a good husband."

She laughed. "Shall I make you a good wife?" she said.

Her tone jarred upon St Buryans. "I don't know what you mean," he said. "Of course, you will make me a perfect wife. What man could want more? I'm not much of a fellow,—not clever or anything,—but you could do a lot for me." And he took her hand and kissed it.

She looked at him for a moment, and her eyes glistened a little; then she said, "I will think about it, and I will write to-night. Now you must go, St Buryans."

He began to protest, but she stopped him, and he kissed her hand again and went.

She threw herself into a chair, put her hands over her eyes, and remained for a few moments deep in thought. Then she hastily scribbled a note, and told the servant to take it to Mrs Forrest and wait for an answer. "I must see her to-night," she said; "but I must decide first, for I know what she will say."

Mrs Forrest had been married about five years. The wife of a rising barrister, she had hitherto lived quietly in a suburb outside London. Lately, however, the Forrests had moved, and had taken a house in one of the streets near Berkeley Square. Patience and Evelyn Forrest had met some years before in a house in Blankshire, and had been mutually attracted to one another: later on they

had seen each other occasionally, but it was not until Patience came to London that the friendship had become really close. The near neighbourhood of the two houses enabled them to meet constantly, and they were now in that stage of intimacy which makes the friendships of women, where they exist, among the most delightful things in the world. Mrs Forrest was a woman of rather above the middle height, with curly fair hair, and a keen, clever face. She was not exactly pretty, but her constantly changing expression and her bright joyous smile gave an attraction to her face which perhaps almost took the place of beauty. On this particular evening she and her husband were sitting together in

the drawing-room — a small room filled with pretty furniture, pictures, and books. She was ensconced in an arm-chair, and her husband was standing before the fire talking to her.

“ You’ll have to go directly, Mark,” she said, looking at the clock. “ It’s nearly half-past nine, and Patience De Lisle is coming.”

“ What a bore ! ” observed Mark.

“ Now you know you’re very fond of her,” said his wife.

“ Yes, but I’m not going to see her. What’s the matter ? — why is she coming ? ”

“ I don’t know : she sent round a note to say she must see me to-night. It sounds as if something had happened, for she was here this morning.”

“ Somebody has proposed, perhaps,” suggested Mark.

“ Yes, but I don’t know who. I wonder——”

“ Well ?”

“ I wonder whether it’s Frank Murchison ?”

“ I thought you said she had refused him definitely.”

“ Yes, I did ; but, Mark, whatever you do, don’t say so. Nobody knows but me.”

“ All right, I shan’t say anything. Why should I ?”

“ Yes ; but you have a way of letting things out by mistake as if every one knew them, and you never see the signs I make you.”

“Nonsense. I’ve never let out anything,” he said, laughing. He looked very handsome as he stood leaning against the mantelpiece, with his fine head and clear-cut features. “But there’s the bell, and there she is. Shall I go?”

“Yes, you’d better. Shall you be working late to-night?”

“No, not very. She’ll be gone by twelve, I suppose?”

Mrs Forrest laughed, and Mark kissed her and went off, just avoiding a meeting with Patience on the stairs. At the first glance Mrs Forrest saw that Patience was worried, and after she had made her comfortable in the corner of the sofa, she asked her what was the matter.

Patience looked straight before her and

was silent for a moment. Then she turned to Mrs Forrest and said, "I have been worried about St Buryans."

"Has he proposed again?" asked Mrs Forrest.

"Yes, to-day. He was very nice, quite different from last week,—you know I told you."

Mrs Forrest nodded.

"He quite touched me to-day, and for a little I felt as if I could marry him. Evelyn, do you think it would have been possible?"

"St Buryans!" said Mrs Forrest, in a tone of surprise.

"Oh, don't look like that," said Patience, throwing her arms round Mrs Forrest's neck and kissing her. "Of course it

isn't possible, only somehow,—Evelyn, I wish I were going to be married. I should like to have something settled."

Mrs Forrest drew her towards her and began caressing her. She was gifted by nature with considerable insight; but just now she was completely at fault, and had no idea what was passing in the mind of Patience, so she adopted the policy of waiting.

The girl went on. "I don't know what it is, Evelyn, but I feel so restless. And I thought, after all, I could marry St Buryans, perhaps. Last week I was taken by surprise, and he annoyed me too. But the poor boy was very nice to-day, and Aunt Jane came to see me, and told me I could do him good.

and all that. Evelyn, I very nearly said Yes."

"But you have said No?" asked Mrs Forrest, in a tone of some dismay.

Patience looked up and laughed. "Oh, I have said No; it's all right, only I think I did want to say Yes very badly just for a few minutes. It would make everything so easy somehow."

"Easy!" said Mrs Forrest; "it wouldn't make anything easy. Why, the difficulties would all begin. It's impossible even to imagine St Buryans as your husband, Patience."

"Well, but why is it?" said Patience. "He's a nice fellow, and he's my cousin, and he's got lots of money. Evelyn, you know half the women in London will want to marry him now."

Mrs Forrest looked at her for a moment anxiously, for she could not quite tell how far Patience was in earnest. And the girl went on, “Seriously, Evelyn, I’ve been thinking a great deal about marriage to-day, and I’m not sure that I’m not very foolish to refuse St Buryans. One may marry, either because one is in love with a man, or because one wants to live a life which suits one. One needn’t be in love, you know, and besides I’m sure I never shall be.”

“But St Buryans!” repeated Mrs Forrest.

“O Evelyn! you old silly, it’s all right, and I’ve refused him. But who am I to marry?” And she turned to Mrs Forrest, throwing out her hands as if in despair.

“Why not Frank Murchison?” said the latter, with composure.

“I can’t marry Mr Murchison,” said Patience, after a second, in quite another tone. It was as if the suggestion had sobered her. “It would be impossible. I like him very much, but—no, I can’t.”

“I used to think you liked him,” said Mrs Forrest. “You saw so much of him at Hatton Towers.” She spoke with apparent indifference, but in reality she was watching Patience closely.

“Hatton Towers? Yes,” returned she, thoughtfully—“yes, I saw a good deal of him there. I hope I haven’t treated him badly, but I never thought he wanted to marry me. Besides, I didn’t really see him more than Lord Wastwater, if

it comes to that, and he doesn't want to marry me."

Mrs Forrest made no reply to this last remark, but after a pause she said, "You are only just twenty; why are you in such a hurry to marry?"

"I'm not," said Patience; "only I'm sure I shall never fall in love, and if I married I should be——"

"Well, what?" said Mrs Forrest.

"Oh, I don't know," returned Patience.

"But why should you never fall in love?" asked Mrs Forrest.

"Because there isn't any one to fall in love with," said Patience. "I can't conceive falling in love with any of the men I meet."

Mrs Forrest laughed.

"Yes, you have been fortunate," said Patience, with a sigh, "and I could imagine falling in love with Mr Mark. But that's no use."

"Well, no," said Mrs Forrest; "but you'll see you'll find somebody. I shall see you desperately in love some day, Patience."

"I don't think so," she replied, with a tone of sorrow in her voice; and she got up and went to the table. On it were various papers, among them one of the day. She glanced at it, then put it down with a shiver.

"More about that horrible murder," she said. "The thought of it haunts me. What does Mr Mark think about it?"

"Oh, he says there are all sorts of

rumours. Every one is talking of it, but no one knows anything."

"Bobby believes it is Kennett," said Patience.

"Mark says most people think that; but he doesn't believe it, for some reason. But why do you read about it?" she went on; "don't think about it."

"I can't help it," said Patience, shivering again; "it's so horrible and so cold-blooded. And then Bobby and Mr Murchison were both there. I get fascinated by it somehow,—the papers are full of nothing else too, now."

She sat down on the ground by the fire and looked into the flame. Mrs Forrest came and stood by her, stroking her hair. Very little more was said. Mrs Forrest

made occasional remarks which Patience answered, but without much interest, and after a while Patience got up to go. She did so very reluctantly, and Mrs Forrest went down-stairs with her, and then went to her husband, who was hard at work in the study.

“Well,” he said as she came in, lying back in his chair and looking at her approvingly,—“well, are the confidences over?”

“It was St Buryans,” she said. “He proposed again to-day, and she half wanted to accept him.”

Mark gave a low whistle.

“Oh, she has refused him,” said his wife; “but it was rather doubtful for a little bit. Lady Marazion had been telling

her that it would do him good, and make something of him, if she married him."

Mark grunted a sort of disapproval.

"But you say she has refused him?" he said.

"Yes, she has."

"Then why do you look perturbed?"

Mrs Forrest walked up and down once or twice; then she came behind her husband and put her hands on his shoulders.

"She was very odd altogether to-night," she said; "and I don't like the way she talks of Lord Wastwater."

"Why, what do you mean?" he asked, quickly.

"She used to see a great deal of him and of Frank Murchison in the old days at Hatton," said Mrs Forrest. "I thought

it was Frank Murchison she liked, but it isn't. I can't help thinking that when she talks of her ideal man, whom she shall never find, and so on, that she is thinking of him ; and if so——”

“ If so,” said her husband, “ it is a bad job. It is a mistake for any woman to be in love with Lord Wastwater.”

“ You think he won't marry her ? ”

“ She would not be happy if he did. He is a strange man. I have come across him once or twice, and I know something of him.”

“ He is very attractive,” she said, slowly.

“ I know you think so. He is attractive to some people ; but he is cynical and heartless.”

“ She does not say so.”

“I imagine he would show his best side to her. And he is very clever, and very many-sided. He might easily attract a girl like her, especially as they were so much together. But for her sake I hope it has not gone deep.”

“You make me uncomfortable, Mark,” said she.

He patted her hand. “I am sorry, but I know both people, you see. Patience would be miserable if she married Lord Wastwater.”

“I wonder what I could do?” she said. “It will be no good speaking to Patience.”

“Why not?” asked Mr Forrest.

“Because either she knows she is in love with him, in which case warning

would be useless, or she doesn't, in which case I shall only open her eyes."

Mr Forrest shuffled his papers. "Well, do as you think best," he said.

"That is so enraging of you, Mark," she said, in pretended anger. "As if I knew. I want you to tell me."

"I'm always for saying nothing," said Mark. "At any rate, I should wait a little,—something may turn up. And just now——" and he looked sadly at the clock, which pointed to a quarter to twelve, and at his papers.

"I see," she said. "Mark, you are a dreadful old bore. But I suppose you are right, and I must wait. Something may happen: Patience may find out that she is in love, or Lord Wastwater may go

away, or marry some one else, or she may change her mind. Anyhow, I shall hear about it."

"That is the only thing that is quite certain," returned her husband.

## CHAPTER XI.

## MRS DEARING'S INDISCRETION.

ONE of Mrs Forrest's surmises was soon to be proved true. When Patience reached home she found her aunt still in the drawing-room, and on expressing her surprise, she was told that Lord Wastwater had come, and had stayed late for the chance of seeing her when she returned. Mrs Dearing made the communication quietly, but she kept her shrewd old eyes fixed on the girl's face, and what she saw there confirmed the suspicions she

had recently begun to entertain. To a deep flush succeeded a look of blank disappointment, and Patience began at once, and with most unmistakable interest, to ask what Lord Wastwater had said, and when he would be likely to come again. Mrs Dearing answered with apparent indifference, then took up her candle and went to bed, and Patience followed her example. She went up-stairs and undressed quickly; then she threw herself into an arm-chair near the open window, and remained for a long time deep in thought.

She was in her sitting-room, a small room which looked out over the Square, and out of which her bedroom opened. It was prettily furnished, filled with all

her favourite books and pictures, and with quaint old furniture such as she loved. After sitting quietly for a long time she rose, and going to a writing-table which stood in one corner, she opened the top drawer and took out a bundle of letters. They were from Lord Wastwater,—some which he had written to her during his absence from Hatton Towers in her father's lifetime, and some that she had received from him in the winter months while he had been out of London. They were clever agreeable letters, containing no word except of kindly friendship,—letters which any older man might have written to a young girl in whom he was interested, nothing more. She went back to her chair, took the letters and read them

through from beginning to end. When she had finished she sat looking at the packet, then slowly raised it to her lips and kissed it. But the action seemed to startle her, for she hastily threw the letters down, and rising, began to walk up and down the room. She had realised in a moment what it all meant—this strange excited state in which she had passed the last few days. She knew now why she had been so indifferent to Murchison and to the others who had proposed,—she knew what she was instinctively trying to escape from when she had thought of marrying St Buryans: she was in love, she felt it, she knew it, and in love with a man who, for ought she knew, cared in no way about her,

for she did not mistake Lord Wastwater's manner. To her it had always been characterised by extreme gentleness, almost deference: she had never observed in him the cynicism and indifference which so often repelled and surprised others; he was at his best with her, as if all the good in his nature was called out and increased. She had always defended him, had contradicted people who called him inscrutable and cold, had spoken of her experience of him as convincing. She had worshipped him at a distance at first: his cleverness, his versatility, and a sort of nameless attraction which he possessed, had fascinated her. She considered him as a being of another world: never in her life had she seen one who at all resembled

him. And then gradually he had made friends with her,—he had been interested in the clever unusual girl, and what she had believed to be a warm friendship had sprung up between them. To her he had shown only his best side, and she had given herself up to its attraction. She had let herself go without thought or question, and she was now awaking to the fact that the feeling she thought friendship was in reality love, and that it had passed wellnigh beyond her control. Patience was brave, and she was proud, and she faced the situation without flinching. At times she recollected words and expressions which she was tempted to believe might almost mean love ; but then her strong sense came to her aid,

and she admitted to herself that he had never passed the bounds of the strictest, most distant friendship. "It's no use," she said to herself after a long time as she lay down on her bed,—"it's no use. Think as I may, I know he doesn't care for me, and I— Well, 'people have died, but not for love,' and I shall get over it, I suppose; but what consummate folly I have shown! Poor Frank! I am sorrier for him than ever, and it's no use." And so she tired herself out with thought, recollection, self-reproach, and struggle for strength, till at last kindly sleep came to her rescue, for she was very young, and she forgot her difficulties for a space. But she came down to breakfast next morning looking worn and

heavy - eyed, and Mrs Dearing, now thoroughly on the alert, drew her own conclusions.

Patience had arranged to spend the day with a friend in the country, and after she had gone off to the station in the carriage, Mrs Dearing sat down to consider the situation. She had lived too long in the world, and had married too many *protégées*, to mistake the signs of love when she saw them, and Patience was a person who found it peculiarly difficult to conceal her feelings; consequently Mrs Dearing was left in very little doubt as to the state of the case. The girl had changed very decidedly in the course of the last few weeks, and, as we know, her aunt had made up her

mind that she was in love, but could not ascertain with whom: now a sudden light had illumined the situation, and Mrs Dearing felt that everything was explained. What so likely, after all, as that Patience should have fallen in love with Lord Wastwater? Thrown together with him as she had been at Hatton Towers, it was the most natural thing in the world. "How silly I was not to think of it!" said Mrs Dearing to herself; "and yet I don't know,—I'm sure no girl in London would think of falling in love with Lord Wastwater. He is so unapproachable, so unlike other men. But, of course, in the country it would be different: he liked her father and her, he saw them constantly, and — well, well,

the harm's done, now let us see what can be made out of it." But the old lady's meditations were not pleasant to her. There was, first, the doubt whether Lord Wastwater had ever dreamt of marrying Patience; and search as Mrs Dearing might in her memory, she could recall no sign of any such wish on his part. Then, supposing he did, would it be a good thing? So long as the idea seemed perfectly absurd, Mrs Dearing had rather liked it, but when she was brought face to face with it as a possibility, matters became very different. Would Patience be happy with Lord Wastwater? He was attractive and clever and rich, and she was in love with him. It seemed sufficient: yet there rose up in Mrs

Dearing's memory old stories and suspicions, faint clouds of doubt, intangible yet definite, and she felt that deep in her heart there lay a distrust of Lord Wastwater. She tried to reason herself out of it, but in vain. She remembered how he had overcome the prejudice against him,—how apparently blameless and straightforward was his life now, how universally received he was; yet as soon as she tried to rest content with this, she realised that the curious indefinite sense of uneasiness which so many people experienced in his company, and which she had always derided, was in truth shared by her also. As an acquaintance, a companion, he was well enough, and to find fault seemed hypercritical; but

as a husband for Patience ! Somehow it would not do, and the old lady began next to wonder how Patience could be cured of her ill-placed attachment. Her meditations were interrupted by the servant, who came to ask whether she would see Frank Murchison. "The very man," thought Mrs Dearing to herself. "Dear, how tiresome it is that Patience won't take a fancy to him ! Take him to my room," she said to the footman, and soon she ascended the stairs to her sitting-room, which was at the back of the house and opened into a small conservatory. When she got there she found Frank, looking rather white and shy. He began by apologising for having come, but Mrs Dearing cut him short. "What-

ever rules are made about Patience," she said, "there can be no reason why you should not come and see me. Sit down and let us have a talk."

"You are very kind," Frank said, as he sat down on a seat close to the heavy curtains which separated the room from the conservatory. "I want to ask your advice and your opinion, for you have always been very kind to me. So I have ventured to come." And he looked up rather anxiously, but was reassured by Mrs Dearing's smile. She liked young men, and had received many confidences in her time. Besides, at this moment she felt unusually predisposed in Frank's favour.

"What is it?" she asked; "or rather, I

suppose I know what it is, don't I?" and she looked at him with an amused yet sympathetic smile.

"Yes, you know," he said,—"you know, of course. I have come to ask whether you think I have any chance?"

"Tell me about it all first," she said; "I heard but the bare fact from Patience, and that only because it slipped out. She wants no one to know."

"Yes, it is good of her," he returned; "yet I'm not sure. I had just as soon every one knew. It won't make any difference to her either way, and that is all I care about."

"Well, no, I suppose not," said Mrs Dearing, frankly; "but tell me about it, —tell me from the beginning."

Frank laughed uneasily. "There is very little to tell," he said. "I saw her constantly at Hatton Towers, and I thought she liked me. We were a great deal together; but I had no money, nor had she, and I could say nothing. After it had gone on more than a year, I asked Lord Wastwater to let me go and find some occupation, but he wished me to stay, and persuaded me I should get something better if I did, and told me Patience could not leave her father, and so on. It was true, and I was not loath to stay near Patience; so another six months dragged on, and then Mr De Lisle died and Patience came to you. Since then——"

"Yes, since then?" said Mrs Dearing.

“Well, you know it all. I did not see Patience for the first few months, and when we came to London I again spoke to Lord Wastwater. Again he asked me to wait, and then the other night, to my surprise, he advised me to try my fate.”

Mrs Dearing nodded her head. “And you did so, and failed?”

“And I did so, and failed; and now I have lots of money, and it’s useless.” He leant his head in his hands, and stared at the floor. Mrs Dearing thought for a moment.

“What did she say to you?” she asked.

“She told me it was quite hopeless,—that we could still be friends, but that I must never hope for anything else.”

"Did you ask her whether there was any one else she cared for?" asked the old lady, quietly.

"Yes, I did. She said, No. Why, do you think there is?" and he looked up quickly, his eyes gleaming.

"No, oh no," said Mrs Dearing, "only I wondered whether you had asked her. That was all."

He said nothing for a moment, then began, "Now, do you think I have any chance, Mrs Dearing?"

"Not now, I think," she answered.

"Not now. Should I have if I waited?"

"Who can tell!" she said.

He got up hastily. "What do you mean?" he asked, almost roughly.

She looked up at him. "Now Frank—

I shall call you Frank in future, because I like you--well, I want you to succeed in this. But don't go and make the mistake of boring Patience. There is nothing in the world which so irritates a woman as to have more love than she wants forced upon her, or even to have the love she likes brought unduly to her notice. Yes, it's true," she went on, answering a sceptical look in his face,— "it's true, although you may not think so. Take my advice, let Patience alone for a bit. I don't mean, of course, that you're to go off in a huff, but just accept the situation."

He looked at her doubtfully.

"Then, do you think she may come round to me?"

"Do I think the sun will shine this day next year? How can I tell? All I say is, it is your best chance."

"But some one else will step in," he said, slowly.

"I think not," answered Mrs Dearing, in a dry voice.

He looked at her for a moment. "There is some one else she cares for, then?" he said.

He was staring straight at her, and the old lady felt that a crisis had come upon her which she was not prepared to deal with. She was dying for sympathy and advice, and she was strangely impelled to tell Frank all her difficulties, but she hesitated. To gain time she said—

"Before we say any more, Frank, look

round the conservatory and see that no one is listening. I thought I heard a noise just now."

Frank hesitated for a second, as if wondering whether this was merely an excuse for putting him off, but he obeyed. Mrs Dearing tried to think out the situation, wondering whether Frank would tell Lord Wastwater, and what would be the result if he did. But before she had arrived at any conclusion she heard Frank's voice saying, "There is no one; you must have been mistaken."

She looked up and saw him standing in the doorway before her, keeping the curtain back with one hand.

"I implore you to tell me," he said, "if there is any one else."

"I think," she said, very slowly, "that she cares about some one, but I don't know if she knows it herself."

He stood quite still, looking fixedly at her. "And he?" he said, in a low voice, as if stunned by what he had heard and was going to hear.

"I don't know about him."

"And this man is?"

"Lord Wastwater."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, and, dropping his arms, he stepped backwards. There was a crash, and in the middle of a mass of scattered earth and broken pots some blossoms of white azalea were seen half crushed. Frank turned, as if to pick them up.

"Never mind," said Mrs Dearing, impa-

tiently ; “ come here now — let us talk this out.”

Frank came : his face was white, his eyes troubled. He sat down opposite to her again, but he spoke not a word. At last Mrs Dearing said, “ You did not expect this, Frank, did you ? ”

“ No,” he said ; “ yet, perhaps, I might have. It is natural in a way : sometimes the most natural things strike us last. But oh, my God, it is awful ! ”

“ But why do you say so ? ” asked Mrs Dearing, in a voice which seemed to be full of tears.

“ May I ask you a question or two first ? ” said Frank.

She assented, and he went on—

“ Does Lord Wastwater know of this ? ”

"I am almost positive he does not," she replied.

"And you said, I think, that Patience herself is not aware of her own feeling?"

"Ah, that is another matter," said Mrs Dearing. "I fancied this morning she was: well, I may be wrong."

"At any rate, she has only just realised it?" said Frank.

"Oh yes, that I am sure of," said Mrs Dearing, eagerly. "I think your proposal and St Buryans' brought things to a crisis. Yes, I am letting out more than I ought," she added, as she saw Frank's look of surprise, "but it can't be helped. I want your help, Frank,—the situation frightens me."

"My help!" he said, bitterly. "I am

hardly likely to be unprejudiced enough to help you much."

"Well, I don't know," said Mrs Dearing. "I think you are generous, and that you love Patience really and unselfishly."

"That's true enough," said Frank.

"Well, it's a great deal," said the old lady, with a half sigh.

"How can I help you, then?" he went on. She hesitated a little. "I want to know what you think of Lord Wastwater," she said. "Supposing he married Patience?" Frank clenched his hand, but she went on steadily, "Supposing that, would she be happy?"

Frank made no answer at first; then he looked straight at her and said, "I believe she would not be happy."

"Even if he cared for her?"

"I cannot believe he would. He does not now, I am sure. He would never have spoken to me as he has. He might do many things, but not that."

"And you think he will never care for her?"

"I do not believe he can care for any woman."

Mrs Dearing looked down, then raised her eyes to his again,—"What makes you say that?"

"It is an instinct," said Frank. "I have lived with Lord Wastwater now for nearly three years, yet I do not know him. He is inscrutable: he might do anything,—it would not surprise me. But this, I believe, I do know. Yet he has a very

sincere feeling for Patience. I think she and her father are the only people he has cared for. Yes, and he likes me a little too ; he has been very kind to me.”

“ And you ? Do you like him ? ”

“ It is impossible not to like him, for he is attractive beyond measure ; yet it is impossible to understand him. One thing I do know, and that is, that Patience would not be happy with him.”

“ Is it because of his past life that you say this, or of anything now ? ”

“ No, neither. I know very little of his past life,—he speaks very little about it. No, it is nothing of that sort.”

“ Remember, there is a great deal which would make her happy,” said Mrs Dearing, as if arguing with herself. “ She likes

power, and riches, and position,—it would all be hers, and she is in love with him."

Frank winced as the words passed her lips. "But she would not be happy long. She wants more than all this,—she wants warmth, and encouragement, and love. She will not find it. Sometimes, when one is with him, it is like receiving a physical chill. It is not what he says, but what he is. I cannot describe what I mean, or put it into words,—it is an instinct. He has no power to love in him."

The old lady had listened gravely, and after Frank's last speech nothing was said for a space. Then she rose and put her hand on his arm. "Frank," she said, "you have behaved very well. I wish with

all my heart Patience would marry you. And I am quite sure that she had better not marry Lord Wastwater. But what can we do?"

He made a gesture of helplessness. "I don't know," he said.

"Supposing you told him. Would he go away?"

"I don't know. He might. It is impossible to say."

"Frank, I believe if he went away for a time Patience would get over it. She is very proud, you know; she will not encourage herself in an attachment to a man who does not return it. And then, perhaps, she will turn to you."

He smiled. "I am not thinking of myself now;" and there was a true earnest

look in his brown eyes. "If I try to prevent Patience from marrying Lord Wastwater, it is not because I hope to marry her myself, but because I want to save her from unhappiness. You believe that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," returned Mrs Dearing. "Well, I leave it to you. Do what you think right. Of course, you will never let Patience suspect you know."

He laughed. "I am not quite a fool. I shall be silent as the grave."

"Then good-bye," she said. "I wish Lord Wastwater had never come back from his island."

"But then I should not have known Patience," he said.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE CURIOUS KNIFE.

ON the Monday afternoon after his visit to Matchford, Roke was sitting in his room hard at work on the Goldstein case. He had told his wife that he did not wish to be disturbed, and consequently when he heard the knocker rapped he took no notice, knowing he was safe from interruption. A moment afterwards, however, his wife came in and announced that Lord Wastwater was at the door asking to see him.

“Oh, Lord Wastwater! that’s another pair of shoes. Yes, my dear, show him in at once. But let no one else come in, not even the Lord Chancellor in his wig and gown.” This was a favourite illustration of Roke’s,—in fact, his children had been known to rush to the window when a knock was heard, in the vain hope of seeing the expected visitor.

“Good day, Roke,” said Lord Wastwater as he entered the room. “Well, how did you get on at Matchford?”

Roke placed a chair for Lord Wastwater. “Well, my lord, I fared well and badly. I got a good deal of information, but it’s not the information I want.”

“Anything against any of the three men?”

“Against Kennett, if any one; but it is very doubtful.”

Roke settled himself in his chair and proceeded to give Lord Wastwater a detailed account of his proceedings.

He told how he had discovered Mrs Flanagan, how he had pursued Jenny Allen to Patton, how he had met her on the road and talked to her, and of their second interview. And he concluded by saying, “The news of the murder was a bad job: if it hadn’t been for that I might have got more out of her.”

“I doubt it. I don’t believe she knows more than she has told you,” said Lord Wastwater, meditatively.

“I think there’s more about Kennett,”

returned Roke. "She knew about his behaviour at the time Mr Goldstein deserted his sister. I'm sure she suspects him."

"You really think that?" said Lord Wastwater.

"Yes, I do, my lord. Of course, it may go for very little."

"The points then are these. Jenny Allen saw the fourth man enter the garden. She does not know whether he is Kennett or a stranger. He was in the garden, and probably the house, long enough to murder Goldstein after talking and smoking with him first, as appears probable. Is this right?"

"Quite," returned Roke. "And now, my lord, we have to find the fourth man."

Lord Wastwater smiled. "Yes," he said, "that's what we have to do. And what do you propose?"

"Well, I must try and find Tom Allen, for one thing."

"There, I think, I can help you," said Lord Wastwater. "I was dining with Goldstein some few weeks ago, and he was declaiming against marriage. Something made him think of this man, I suppose, for he mentioned him as an instance. I recollect his saying he had had a wonderfully good servant, who had left him in order to marry, had tired of his wife, deserted her, and asked to be taken back. He said, 'I did so at first, but I found the woman and the brat of a child for ever whimpering round the house, so I

shipped him off to Australia.' And then he turned to a man who was sitting near him and said, 'That was Tom Allen; you recollect him, don't you?'"

"Then there's an end to much hope that Tom Allen will throw any light on the situation," said Roke. "Unless," he added quickly, "he thought he had been ill-treated, and never went to Australia. If so——"

"Impossible," said Lord Wastwater. "The woman would have known him, and held her tongue."

"If it isn't Kennett, why did the man give her money?" said Roke. "That's what puzzles me. That money is a great difficulty, and it's a great proof against Kennett."

“Yes; and the cigar is a great proof for him,” returned Lord Wastwater. “But what about the knife?”

“We’ve advertised for any one who knows such a knife, of course,” said Roke. “There’s no answer yet.”

“Can you let me see it?”

Roke unlocked a drawer and took out a paper parcel. This he carefully unfolded, took out the knife, and gave it to Lord Wastwater. The latter examined it minutely. “It’s Indian, I think,” he said. “This carved work is curious; and I wonder why these little silver plates were put on. Perhaps there was some more carved work which has been taken off. Let’s see. Have you a screw-driver, Roke?”

Roke rummaged in a drawer. "A detective ought to have everything," he answered, "and I know there is one somewhere. Here it is;" and he produced a small instrument and gave it to Lord Wastwater. The latter worked away for a little while, and at last the silver plate fell upon the table. It disclosed a hole. "There," said Lord Wastwater, "I thought so,—this knife has had some alteration made on it: if you can find the silversmith who did it, you may get some valuable help."

Roke took it and looked. He assented, and was just handing it back when his attention was caught by something. He examined the knife again carefully. "Why, the hole is filled up with paper!" he exclaimed. "What a queer thing to do."

“Paper!” said Lord Wastwater, and his eyes glistened. “Paper; but perhaps that is a clue. Let me look.” And he carefully extracted from the little holes some scraps of stuff that looked like nothing but dirt.

“Glorious!” said Roke. “We may get at something now, my lord.”

“Don’t be too sanguine; it may be of no use.” As he spoke, Lord Wastwater was carefully unrolling the little scrap. “It’s the thin kind of straw paper, like what is used for bills,” he said. “Nothing on this, though,” and he began poking about with the pin again.

Several little bits had been extracted and examined in vain, when Roke exclaimed, “Here are some letters,” and he

spread before Lord Wastwater the little bit of paper, on which were printed the letters *h o.*

“What do you suppose they mean?” said Lord Wastwater.

“I think it’s part of a bill. You see it’s the end of a word, for the paper is blank after it,” answered Roke, excitedly.

“Then it’s either the name of a place or a person.”

“Yes; it may be Soho, of course. What other names are there that end in *ho*, my lord?”

“There are Bolitho, and Westward Ho. I can think of no other English names at this moment,” returned Lord Wastwater.

“Well, we’re bound to try Soho first, I suppose.”

Lord Wastwater got up, and walked up and down the room in silence.

“It may be a foreign word,” he said.

“Of course; still we’ll try Soho, and then we’ll see.” Roke had recovered his cheerfulness, and was evidently anxious to begin his researches at once.

“I don’t think it’s so very much of a clue,” said Lord Wastwater. “In the first place, it may not be a bill at all, and then it may be one of a long time ago.”

“We may be able to throw some light on the question of date,” said Roke, taking up a case which lay close by. “Here’s a powerful magnifying-glass,” and he sat down and took up one of the little bits of paper after another. Lord Wast-

water leant against the chimneypiece watching him.

“I’ve got it, my lord,” he said, in a tone of triumph.

“What have you found?”

“Why, the date. Look, here it is in pencil. You can see it without the glass, only the paper is so crumpled one wouldn’t notice. Here it is, 18—, this very year.”

Lord Wastwater took the glass, and looked for some time at the figures.

“Then you think this knife was in the hands of a silversmith this year?” he asked.

“Of course I do; and that silversmith lived in Soho,” said Roke. “Well, my lord, I hope he won’t answer the advertisement. I’d like to trace him by this clue.”

“Why should the man put his own bill in like that, I wonder?” said Lord Wastwater.

“That’s a matter of small importance, so long as he did put it there,” observed Roke. “He’ll tell me when I find him.”

“He may be dead.”

“Bad luck is always probable,” said Roke; “but if he’s not, I shall find him. And if I do find him, my lord, it will go hard if he don’t give me the description of Mr Goldstein’s murderer.”

Lord Wastwater took out his cigar-case, lighted a cigar, and turned to leave the room.

“Good-bye, Roke,” he said; “let me know how you get on. And look here, if you find this man bring him to Wastwater House.

Something may be discovered perhaps. But I hope his description of the man who owns the knife won't remind you of Kennett."

Roke laughed, and went to open the door for Lord Wastwater, then returned to begin preparations for his search.

Lord Wastwater went home deep in thought. He was going over in his mind all the facts of the case, summing up the evidence, calculating the chances. "When all's said and done," he said to himself as he entered his house, "there are ten chances to one still that Goldstein's murderer will remain undiscovered." On reaching the library he was surprised to find Frank, who was sitting at the table writing. He looked up when Lord Wastwater came in, and the latter at once exclaimed, "What's the mat-

ter with you, Frank? You look as if you'd seen a ghost! And why do you sit sweltering in here over those stupid papers of mine? There are only about two other days like this in an English summer. Go out and enjoy yourself."

Frank had not expected Lord Wastwater to return that afternoon, and after spending the hours since his talk with Mrs Dearing in fruitless thought and vacillation of purpose, he remembered that Lord Wastwater had given him some papers to copy, and turned with relief to a definite occupation. Lord Wastwater's arrival, however, brought the whole thing before him again, and he looked up at him with so harassed and sad a gaze, that Lord Wastwater really became alarmed.

“ What is the matter, Frank ? Have you heard any bad news ? is anything wrong ? ”

“ Nothing ; no—nothing particular,” said Frank, hesitatingly. He was trying to gain time to make up his mind, and fighting with an insane desire to tell his secret straight out, and watch the effect on Lord Wastwater. The latter, however, was not to be put off. He came forward, and standing opposite Frank, said quite coolly—

“ Look here, Frank, something is the matter—I can see that. Now, you must tell me. What is it ? Is it anything about the murder ? ”

Frank shook his head.

“ Have you had bad news from home ? ”

Frank shook his head again.

“ Have you got into any scrape ? ”

Again the negative answer. The questions came like blows from a hammer, and Frank knew the right one must come soon. But there was no time for thought.

“Then it is something about Patience De Lisle. What is it?”

Silence.

“What is wrong with Miss De Lisle?”

Frank stood up, looking full at Lord Wastwater. He had made up his mind. “Well, I will tell you,” he said. “Remember, you have forced it from me. I have heard to-day that Miss De Lisle refused me because she cared for some one else. Do you know who it is?”

“How should I know?” answered Lord Wastwater.

Frank went on bitterly, "You have been encouraging me and advising me, and all the time, all the time——"

"Well?" said Lord Wastwater.

"It is you she cares for."

"Me?" said Lord Wastwater.

"Yes, you."

"And how do you know this very startling fact?" asked Lord Wastwater.

"Mrs Dearing told me this morning that she was certain Miss De Lisle cared for somebody, although she was not sure that she knew it herself. And she is also certain that it is you. After all, it is not surprising, —you have seen a great deal of her."

Lord Wastwater gave a short laugh.

"Upon my word, it's almost enough to make me believe in the powers of evil," he

said. “ It’s the most ingeniously malicious contrivance for making every one uncomfortable. But make your mind easy, Frank, —I like Patience far too well to marry her. I shan’t be your rival.”

Frank made a gesture as of doubt, but Lord Wastwater went on, “ And your evidence seems to me rather doubtful. Mrs Dearing may be drawing on her imagination, and Patience may only have had a headache. You are taking the matter too tragically, I think.”

“ But supposing it is true.”

“ Oh, supposing the skies fall. She will get over it; it is probably a passing fancy. You just let her alone for a little, Frank; and don’t look like that, man,—it will all come right.”

“I thought, perhaps, you would go away,” muttered Frank.

“Go away! What, because I am too attractive? Really, Frank,” he went on, “you don’t seem to know in what a light you are placing Miss De Lisle. Your suggestion is an insult, or perilously near it. You may rest content, I will take care of myself and of her.”

Somehow the tables had been turned, and Frank, who had thought himself the injured person, found himself constrained to apologise.

“I didn’t mean to annoy you, but I thought if I told you it might——”

“Yes, yes, I quite understand,” interrupted Lord Wastwater; “now, let’s say no more about it. I trust Mrs Dearing

will be as discreet. And now, do go out, Frank, and look a little more cheerful if you can."

Frank obeyed, and left the room in silence, profoundly dissatisfied with the result of the interview. But Lord Wastwater sat for a time doing nothing, and thinking of what had passed.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.











